

THE BLESSED VIRGIN
IN THE 19TH CENTURY

APPARITIONS
REVELATIONS
GRACES

Erlyn Mary Buckenham. 1/6

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THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY :
APPARITIONS, REVELATIONS, GRACES

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Frontispiece.

BERNADETTE AS A NUN.

The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century :

Apparitions, Revelations, Graces

BY

BERNARD ST. JOHN



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DEDICATION.

O Mary, Mother, be not loth
To listen—thou whom the stars clothe,
Who seest and mayst not be seen :
Hear us at last, O Mary Queen !
Into our shadow bend thy face ;
Bowing thee from the secret place,
O Mary Virgin, full of grace.
—*Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*

TO THE
TWO DEPARTED ONES
WHOSE MEMORY HAS INSPIRED THIS BOOK.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.

In conformity with the Decree of Pope Urban VIII., we declare that wherever in the following pages such words as *miracle, miraculous, apparitions, and revelations* occur in reference to subjects on which the Holy See has not yet pronounced, such terms are used in a human and historic sense only, and not with the object of forestalling the Church's decisions on the matters in question.

INTRODUCTION BY THE
REV. EDMOND THIRIET, O.M.I.
(TRANSLATION).

FRANCE, in the course of the nineteenth century, unfaithful in so many ways to her mission as "Eldest daughter of the Church," is now astonishing the world still further by her deeds of apostasy and impious violence. It almost seems as if the closing words of her history as until now recorded should be *Finis Gallicæ*. In presence of her multifold delinquencies in a religious sense, one is almost tempted to ask why retributive justice has not weighed more heavily upon her than it has done.

By way of answer to this half query, a poem in action, of perfect unity of plan, wrought out by Heaven and told in that French tongue known all over the world, presents itself to the mind. It is a theme telling of Infinite love and pity for man ; it is one that has already been as water in the desert to countless souls. It seems to say why, in Heaven's action with respect to France in recent years, mercy may have more than tempered justice. It is a poem, each chapter of which is one of those Manifestations of the Blessed Virgin Mary in France, with which the Catholic world is now more or less familiar ; in short, it is a nineteenth

century Gospel, causing the age which saw it given to the world to be called the *Siècle de Marie*.

I congratulate the author of the present book on having had the happy thought of presenting the public with the history of these Manifestations as a whole. The subject is treated not from the point of view of a devotee or of an *illuminé*, but from that of an historian bent on a careful examination of facts that may be called contemporary. As such, it appeals to a far wider class of readers than the one embracing persons strictly denominated as pious. But while not aiming at being a devotional book properly so called, it is calculated, by the facts which it puts forth, to act as a powerful stimulus to devotion to Our Lady. In short, it is an admirable synthesis of the great Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in France in the nineteenth century.

At the end of the volume, in the form of an epilogue, certain prominent ideas are insisted on as asserting themselves throughout these Manifestations, and as connecting them in harmonious unity of plan, and as leading to the logical conclusion that *Digitus Dei est hic*. Such a conclusion will probably be the one arrived at by whoever carefully and from a Catholic point of view reads *The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century : Apparitions, Revelations, Graces*.

May this work, commendable for so many reasons, cause Mary the Immaculate to be better known and loved throughout English-speaking countries.

EDMOND THIRIET, O.M.I.,

*Late Superior of the Basilica of the Sacred
Heart, Montmartre.*

May 1st, 1903.

PREFACE.

Do English Catholics of to-day, young with the young life blood of a great Catholic revival, not yet a century old, need a further stimulus in the matter of devotion to the Blessed Virgin? The Rev. Frederic William Faber, of the Oratory, addressing the Catholics around him in 1862, says in the preface to his translation of the Blessed Grignon de Montfort's *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*:—"Here in England Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low, thin, and poor. It is frightened out of its wits by the sneers of heresy. It is always invoking human respect and carnal prudence, wishing to make Mary so little of a Mary that Protestants may feel at ease about her. Its ignorance of theology makes it unsubstantial and unworthy. It is not the prominent characteristic of our religion which it ought to be. It has no faith in itself."

Are these remarks more or less applicable now than when they were written? may be asked. The question is a wide one. Fresh enemies are to the front in our day. A wave of naturalism and rationalism is trying to make way into the very citadel of the Church, and is already washing the outworks, its aim being to relegate

the supernatural to the very smallest place possible. Protestantism, the old enemy, though no longer to be reckoned with as an active force in itself, is leaguering with other enemies to try to sap the ramparts of Catholicism ; and though weakened as to dogma as it is, retains its old virus of antagonism to the Church's devotion to the Mother of Christ.

Whether or not English Catholics of our time deserve the reproach gently levelled against them by Father Faber forty years ago, the antidote proposed by the eminent Oratorian appeals at the present day with at least equal force. We might almost say that it appeals now with a force never equalled at any previous period. This may seem a bold assertion ; but it is one that will bear being examined.

In truth, devotion to Mary now comes to us not only weighted with dogma and the experience of all the Christian ages, but we see it, moreover, illustrated by certain object-lessons bearing immediately upon our own time. These object-lessons are as flashes from the invisible world, beacon-lights along the horizon. We allude here to those Apparitions and Revelations, with their attendant phenomena, of which it is the object of the following pages to treat.

It would seem as if Providence had waited until now in order to present these object-lessons quickly in succession to a world dazzled by its own science. And the world, in the name of science, seizes upon the object-lessons thus presented and applies to them its latest methods of investigation ; but to no purpose. How explain, in a human sense and satisfactorily, the radiant Apparition at the Lourdes Grotto, or the no

less radiant one in the night sky above Pontmain—each accompanied by words that were to be singularly ratified by subsequent events? Or, how explain the instantaneous forming, at the voice of prayer, of sound flesh in an unsound part? Or the sudden acquiring of sight, speech, and hearing, by those who had never seen, spoken, or heard? All this Lourdes has witnessed. Or how explain the sudden and complete straightening of a backbone considered by science to be irremediably crooked, as in the case of Maria Vaugeois at Pontmain?

The position occupied by the Virgin-Mother in the religious life of the 19th century, justifies us in asking whether we may not be even now entering upon those times alluded to by the Blessed Grignon de Montfort in the work just referred to, when he says :—"Christ wills that now His holy Mother be more known, more loved, and more honoured than ever ;" and when a little further on he describes, as follows, the men who were to be raised up to combat in these latter times :—"They will have in their mouths the two-edged sword of the word of God ; they will bear on their shoulders the ensanguined banner of the Cross ; they will hold a crucifix in their right hand, and a rosary in their left ; the sacred names of Jesus and Mary will be in their hearts, and the mortification and modesty of Christ in their whole conduct."

Do we not see men answering to this description at work in the great religious revival that has taken place in France in the 19th century? Do we not see religious bodies raised up to proclaim special prerogatives of the Virgin-Mother as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Missionaries of the Immaculate

Conception? And among them do we not see more than one as a direct consequence of one or other of the great manifestations of the past age in the shape of Apparitions and Revelations? For had there been no Apparition by Mount Gargas, we should never have heard of the Missionaries of La Salette ; and had not the converted Jew, Theodore Ratisbonne, been won by the devotion to Notre-Dame des Victoires in the early days of its history, and had not his brother Alphonse been converted by the vision in the church of St. Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, the world would probably not have been enriched by the two congregations of Our Lady of Sion.

In short, the religious revival of the last century, and the great development of devotion to Our Lady which belongs to the same period, cannot be dissociated.

The missionaries whom the Blessed de Montfort saw in prophetic spirit, we now seem to see in reality, leaving their country in numbers, driven thence by an impious Government. In a few weeks there will probably not be a religious as such left in France. This is in the spring of the year of Grace 1903. They go shaking the dust from their feet and carrying to other lands the truths which they know. May this exodus of the best of France's sons benefit England as a similar one did a century ago ! In the meantime, sanctuaries, old and new, in the country they leave, are left vacant or pass into other hands. Some must be inevitably closed. Perhaps worse is in store. In any case, the splendid glow of devotion to Our Lady, which in France for the last seventy years has struck through materialism, agnosticism, and pessimism, must necessarily for the

moment, to a certain extent, fade in the land that saw it rise. But the memory of the facts that it proclaims lives, and it will spread and radiate elsewhere, awaiting the moment when in France, from present ruin and death, a fresh growth of spiritual things bursts forth.

This France, in which extremes so meet, which on the one hand seems drifting into modern paganism, and on the other shows us scenes in which Heaven seems to touch earth—this France, to whom may be applied our Saviour's words : " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee"—this France, we say, proclaims by facts, and in language modern and realistic, certain vital truths as no other country can. From her more than a thousand shrines in honour of the Mother of Christ, each speaking by *ex votos* in marble and gold, she says with the psalmist:—" O thou that answerest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."

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PART I.

Sister Catherine Labouré and the
“Miraculous Medal.”

PART I.

Sister Catherine Labouré and the “Miraculous Medal.”

CHAPTER I.

EACH year, on the 27th November and on the eight following days, there is a continual inpouring of the outside world through the *porte-cochère* of the community house of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul in the Rue du Bac. These people are on their way to the chapel beyond. It is the mother-house of the Congregation that is thus being invaded.

The building is plain, looks on the street, and has nothing about it of a conventual character, if we except a niche in its façade which contains a statue, with these words underneath:—

Monstra te esse matrem.

The *Bon Marché* is in front, one of the vastest emporiums in the world; fashion and frivolity are in the air; the stream of busy Paris life passes by. “What can the religious attraction be behind those walls?” an uninitiated spectator might well ask, on any of the nine days alluded to. The answer would be: “It is the annual novena in honour of the Feast of the ‘Miraculous Medal.’” Yes, it is this feast that is drawing thousands of Parisians

to the chapel of the Sisters of Charity in the Rue du Bac—to this their chapel which contains the heart of their founder, the body of their foundress, Louise de Marillac, and which is, moreover, rich in memories of Sister Catherine Labouré. The feast dates but from 1894. By a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of July 10th of that year, a feast with proper office was instituted to commemorate the revelation, in 1830, of the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, commonly called the “Miraculous Medal.” It was fixed for November 27th.

It is worth while here to dwell on certain words of the decree of the Congregation of Rites on this subject. In the lessons for the liturgical office of the new feast the details of Sister Catherine’s visions are clearly put forth. The Roman document commences :—“ In the year 1830, as testified by authentic records, the august Mother of God deigned to appear to a devout person named Catherine Labouré, of the community of the Filles de la Charité, founded by St. Vincent of Paul.” After entering into the details of the subject, the document continues :—“ The Holy See has decided that, as in the case of the Rosary and of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, a special feast should be celebrated each year in memory of this Apparition of the Mother of God and of her holy medal. Also, after a careful examination of all these facts by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and after a

favourable conclusion being arrived at respecting them, Leo XIII., Supreme Pontiff, grants to the Society of Priests of St. Vincent of Paul the permission to celebrate a Mass with proper office in honour of this manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate. The same favour is granted to all bishops and religious communities that may solicit it."

In the decree of the Congregation of Rites on this subject the following words, by Cardinal Masella, Prefect of the Congregation, occur: "His Holiness, on the report I presented to him, has deigned to approve and authorise a feast under the name of that of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Miraculous Medal."

Rome, before taking this step, had allowed more than sixty years to pass. The institution of the feast serves to bring into fresh light the circumstances of the origin of the medal called miraculous. These circumstances mark an epoch in the religious life of the age. They open the series of celestial manifestations, or, in other words, of Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to mortal eye, which, in this respect, have drawn the attention of the Catholic world to France for the last seventy years. To see in relief this luminous period we must look to the one that went before it.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, in the world of thought, the consequences of the upheaval of ideas caused by the Revolution were still

in full activity, and the extremest aridity in religious matters prevailed. And although about 1830 we see a few Catholics like Montalembert and Lacordaire preparing for the great struggle for religious liberty, these men were but as an oasis in the midst of a desert of Voltairianism and unbelief.

Such was the state of things when the medal of the Immaculate Conception, claiming to be of revealed origin, made its appearance. It was as a star against a dark horizon. It was believed in ; it was accepted ; it sped. And with it were accepted, in the minds of numbers, the visions of the humble Sister of Charity of which it was the reflex.

This point is the more worth dwelling on since Catholics had had time to become almost unfamiliar with celestial manifestations of the kind intended for the world at large.

But lo, in 1830 we find the thread of Heaven's dealings with earth in the form of supernatural communications intended for the Catholic world resumed in a marked manner. In a religious sense a fresh epoch has opened.

Seven years after the visions of Sister Catherine Labouré we see the Association of Notre Dame des Victoires, born of a direct inspiration from Heaven, coming suddenly into existence, and destined in the designs of Providence to carry the "miraculous medal" to the ends of the world.

And, on looking back from the beginning of the

twentieth century across the period thus begun in 1830, we see the religious atmosphere of the time illumined by an occasional rift in the clouds in the shape of an Apparition or series of Apparitions. La Salette and Lourdes will at once present themselves to the reader's mind.

The while around, a great religious revival has been going on, and the supernatural has been asserting itself boldly in the face of science and unbelief. With this the figure of the Virgin Mother has come into more vivid prominence than perhaps at any previous time, if we except that of St. Bernard. Yes, the nineteenth century has with truth been called "Mary's century" (*le siècle de Marie*). Has not the whole period we are considering been spanned by the radiance of a single dogma—that of her Immaculate Conception? This dogma was told in letters of gold to Sister Catherine Labouré; it was told by the infallible voice of Rome in 1854; it was told to the child Bernadette at the Lourdes grotto.

We go back to 1830, and to the period that, in a religious sense, was then opened by the revelation of the Medal of the Immaculate Conception to Sister Catherine Labouré. She who was thus the favoured recipient of a divine message was, at the time of which we write, a novice of the mother-house of the *Filles de la Charité*, of the Rue du Bac. But we have glimpses of her before this as Zoé Labouré, a motherless girl, with the blood of a

Burgundy peasant in her veins, and acting as her father's right hand.

It will be well for the reader to make acquaintance with her at this early period. Zoé acted a mother's part towards a younger sister, and was efficient in all that pertained to a farmhouse and poultry yard. A pretty picture is given of her about this time, surrounded by seven or eight hundred pigeons.

While attending to farm and domestic duties she gave every proof of being solidly pious. At the same time she showed signs of a resolute will, and a somewhat quick temper.

By the time she was eighteen she had refused more than one suitor, saying: "I am affianced to Jesus, and will have no other spouse than Him." A dream she had about this time seems to have had some weight in causing her to decide upon entering the congregation of the *Filles de la Charité*. The dream was as follows: She was in a side chapel of her parish church, when she suddenly saw an aged priest appear. The priest began to put on vestments preparatorily to offering the Holy Sacrifice. She assisted at the Mass that followed. When it was over, the priest made a sign to her to follow him. Instead of doing so she withdrew, walking backwards, but without taking her eyes from him who had thus signed to her. On leaving the church she stopped to make a sick call in the village, and again met the venerable old man. He accosted her thus: "You do well, my

child, to visit the sick. You try to avoid me now, but some day you will be glad to come to me. Do not forget that God has designs on you." Zoé still drew back, stupified and frightened. She awoke to find the whole thing a dream. It was a dream, however, that continued to haunt her.

Sometime afterwards, being on a visit at the house of a relative at Châtillon-sur-Seine, she was taken one day to the community of the *Filles de la Charité* there. The first thing she saw on entering the parlour was a portrait of a priest exactly resembling the old man of her dream. She asked whose portrait it was, and was told that it was that of St. Vincent of Paul. Zoé Labouré thought she understood the dream, and the future seemed to unfold before her. She was no longer in doubt as to what religious order or congregation to enter. Not long afterwards we find her in Paris, a novice at the mother-house of the *Filles de la Charité*.

This was in 1830. Zoé, to be known henceforth as Sister Catherine Labouré, was then twenty-one years of age, and so unlettered that she could neither read nor write. Alluding later on to her ignorance in this respect, she was wont to say: "It was after entering the community that I learnt what I know."

Here commenced for her a course of remarkable spiritual experiences, among which must be numbered her frequent visions with the eye of sense of our Lord in His sacramental Presence. Here, too,

commenced that remarkable series of visions with which her name is associated.

We are on the 18th July, 1830, the Feast of St. Vincent of Paul. It was about eleven o'clock at night. Sister Catherine was in the chapel, while the rest of the community were in bed and asleep. How she came there under such circumstances must be sought for in a more detailed account of her life. We find her in the chapel which was ablaze with light, and we have to do with the remarkable vision that followed.

According to her account, she heard a slight rustling sound, and then saw a female figure of exceeding beauty come and take a seat on the left side of the sanctuary. Her first feelings of hesitation over, she fell on her knees before and close to the beauteous figure. She afterwards described this vision to her confessor, M. Aladel, who was at that time the spiritual director of the community. Later on it was committed by her to writing as an act of obedience. In her account she says: "That moment, which it would be impossible for me to describe, was the happiest I had known. The Blessed Virgin told me how to act when I was in trouble. Pointing with her left hand to the altar, she told me to throw myself before it, and there to pour out my soul in prayer, adding that by that means I should receive all the consolation I needed. Then she said to me: 'My child, I am going to entrust you with a mission. It will cause you

suffering, but you will be sustained by the thought that it is all for the glory of God. You will meet with opposition, but do not fear, for grace will be given you. Tell simply and without fear what takes place within you. You will see certain things; you will be inspired in your prayers. Give an account of all this to him who has charge of your soul.' I then asked the Blessed Virgin to explain to me the things I had seen."

Here the novice alludes no doubt to certain previous visions she had had, and principally in connection with St. Vincent of Paul. The heavenly visitant replied: "My child, the times are evil; troubles are about to come upon France; the monarchy will be overthrown; and the whole world will be upheaved by misfortunes of every kind. But come to the foot of this altar, for there graces will be showered on all who come, be these great or lowly. At a certain moment the danger will be great and things will seem to be at their worst. Fear not, for I shall be with you. You will be conscious of my presence and of God's protection and of that of St. Vincent of Paul watching over his two communities. Do not be afraid, and never lose courage, for I shall be with you. There will be victims in other communities. [Here, according to the recital, the Blessed Virgin shed tears.] There will be victims among the Paris clergy. The Archbishop will die. My child, the cross will be despised and overthrown

and men will open our Lord's side afresh, and the whole world will be in trouble."

"When will all this happen?" asked the novice within herself, and an interior voice answered: "In forty years' time."

Reader, we have only to travel in thought from 1830 to Paris in 1870-71 to see the fulfilment of the last portion of this midnight prophecy.

When the *voyante* gave an account of this vision to her director, he, for wise reasons of his own, appeared to treat her communications lightly, while in reality, attaching all the importance to them they deserved, and making notes of them in writing. The matter of these communications was in 1856 committed to paper by Sister Catherine at M. Aladel's request.

Now that more than seventy years have passed we are able to see this vision in its true light. It served as a prelude to two others that were to follow, revealing the now famous medal of the Immaculate Conception.

Although Sister Catherine had been told by her spiritual director to let her mind dwell as little as possible on what she had seen and heard, and although she did her best to obey in the matter, yet she could not prevent her thoughts from reverting frequently to what she felt to be a delightful reality.

On the 17th of the November following, and at about half-past five in the afternoon, the novice was alone in the chapel intent on her evening

meditation. Hearing a slight sound, she looked up and saw on the right side of the sanctuary the figure that had rivetted her gaze in the midnight vision four months before. It was, however, differently clothed.

The figure was of middle height, and the face of a beauty that defied description. The veil and dress were of a white which the *voyante* calls *blanc d'aurore*. She who thus saw tells us that the Blessed Virgin stood upon a globe or upon half a one, and that she held another globe in her hands. We are about to quote from Sister Catherine's written account :

“ Her eyes were cast upwards and her face became as if illumined while she offered the globe to our Lord. Suddenly her fingers appeared covered with rings of precious stones, the rays from which shed such brilliancy around that soon her dress and feet became lost in the blaze of light. The gems were of different sizes and the rays emitted from them consequently more or less brilliant. I cannot express what I felt or all I learnt in so short a time. As I was absorbed in contemplating her, the Blessed Virgin looked at me, and an interior voice the while said, ‘ This globe which you see represents the world in general, and France in particular.’ The beauty and brilliancy of the rays as I then saw them cannot be described. The Blessed Virgin added: ‘ Theserays are a symbol of the graces which I obtain for those who ask them of me.’ ”

Sister Catherine might have said with St. Paul :
“ Whether in the body or out of the body, I know not.” Her words concerning this moment are :
“ J’étais, ou je n’étais pas. . . . Je ne sais . . . je jouissais.”

Then, an oval outline framing the picture of the Blessed Virgin from the waist upwards assumed shape, the outline being formed by the words in gold : “ O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” “ Then,” continues the recital, “ a voice said to me : ‘ Have a medal struck according to this model. All who wear it † will receive great graces. Graces will be showered in abundance on those who have confidence.’ ”

The *voyante* says that at that moment the scene before her seemed to turn round, and that she saw, as it were, the other side of the picture. Instead of the vision just described, she then saw the letter M surmounted by a cross, and below it two hearts, one encircled by a crown of thorns, and the other pierced with a spear. Catholic reader, look at your medal of the Immaculate Conception. It will probably show you on the one side in feeble outline the radiant vision vouchsafed to Sister Catherine Labouré, and on the other the *insignia* just described.

Not many days later, at the same place and at the same hour, Sister Catherine was favoured with a similar vision but with slight differences as to detail. She was in the chapel, intent on her

meditation as before. This time the figure appeared above and a little behind the High Altar, just where the marble statue representing the Apparition has its place at the present day. It was enframed from the waist upward in the oval half-circlet formed by the inscription in gold: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." As before, the picture, if the term may be applied, seemed to turn round, and, as before also, the *voyante* saw on the other side the letter M with the cross above and the two hearts beneath. The words she heard were the same—"Have a medal struck according to this model." The *voyante* concludes her account of this vision as follows: "Words cannot express what I understood when I saw the Blessed Virgin offer the globe to our Lord, or what I experienced as I was looking at her." Alluding to the rays of light emitted by the hands of the Apparition, she says: "A voice within me said, 'These rays are a symbol of the graces which the Blessed Virgin obtains for those who ask them of her.'"

These visions, with their distinct message respecting the medal, were, as before, told by Sister Catherine to her director; but apart from this, the strictest secrecy was observed by her on the subject. Although the fact of the visions was already rumoured around, no one imagined that she knew more about them than did any other member of the community; and she succeeded in preserving this

attitude throughout her life, and even with respect to those with whom she came daily in contact. It was not until she was old and her end was drawing near that a favoured few were taken into her confidence respecting the heavenly secrets with which she had been favoured.

In January, 1831, Sister Catherine made her profession, and was clothed with the habit of a daughter of St. Vincent of Paul. She was then transferred to the Hospice d'Enghien in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where the remaining forty-six years of her life were to be spent. She left the mother-house of the congregation without seeing the realization of her heart's wish, which was the striking of the medal of the Immaculate Conception according to the vision she had had and the commands she had received.

The medal was struck a year and a-half afterwards, in June, 1832, with the consent of Mgr. de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris.

Mgr. de Quélen, at his own request, received one of the first struck. Resolved to try at once its efficacy in a spiritual sense, he armed himself with it and set out to pay a visit to Mgr. de Pradt, Archbishop of Malines, who was in a dying state and sorely in need of priestly ministrations, being as he was one of the refractory *Constitutionnels* of the Revolutionary period. The erring prelate at first refused to see the Archbishop of Paris. Then sending for him almost immediately, he retracted

his errors and died literally in his arms. This is the first signal grace in the way of conversion recorded in connection with the medal soon to acquire for itself the name of the miraculous one.

The little talisman made its way at first modestly from hand to hand by means of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul. Soon it was everywhere in request. Directors of religious communities and of institutions, parish priests, and even bishops made use of it as an instrument of evangelization and of conversion. Before long there was hardly a parish or a hospital in France in which it was not known and in demand. Numbers of persons wore it, ignoring its origin, but knowing it only by the graces with which it was associated.

To relate the marvels in the physical order effected in connection with this medal in these the early days of its history, would be to produce a long list of cures reputed miraculous. More precious still, those numerous miracles of grace in the way of conversions with which its name began at once to be associated, which have continued until now, and which recording angels must have written down as one of the most beautiful pages in the religious life of the age.

In 1837 the Archconfraternity of Notre-Dame des Victoires coming into existence, each member of the new association being expected to wear the medal revealed to Sister Catherine Labouré, and

this association spreading with extraordinary rapidity, the spiritual amulet was quickly borne by this means alone from one end of the world to the other.

In 1836 an ecclesiastical commission was appointed by the Archbishop of Paris to consider the question of the reality of the visions on which the fact of the "miraculous medal" was based. Though the majority of the members of the commission were favourable to the cause in question, no decision was formally arrived at.

M. Aladel, the good priest who had been the first, and who was long the sole, confidant of Sister Catherine Labouré in her communications with heaven, did not remain an indifferent spectator of what was going on around. After being an active agent in the medal's coming into existence, he busied himself during the years that followed in collecting material for a work respecting it. This work was published in 1841. The information which it contained included some experiences on the part of a holy nun of the well-known convent of Notre Dame des Ermites, at Einsiedeln, in Switzerland, in the Canton of Schwitz, the author looking upon these experiences as a striking confirmation of Sister Catherine's visions in 1830.

On this subject we quote from the book as follows :

"On August 17th, 1835, this nun being wrapt in ecstasy after Holy Communion, saw our Lord

on a throne of glory. He said to her : ‘ Whither goest thou, and whom seekest thou?’ ‘ O Jesus,’ she replied, ‘ I go to Thee, and it is Thee only whom I seek.’ ‘ Where dost thou seek me?—in what?—and by whom?’ ‘ Lord, it is in myself that I seek Thee, and in Thy holy Will, and through Thy mother.’ ”

The nun had come back to her ordinary state and was reflecting on what had happened, when, as she says, the Blessed Virgin appeared before her resplendently beautiful, and holding a medal having upon it her own effigy surrounded by the inscription : ‘ O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.’ ” The hands of the Apparition, which were extended, emitted rays of light. The religious then heard a voice of great sweetness say : “ These rays are a symbol of the graces which I obtain for men.” The other side of the medal then became visible, and the letter M was seen upon it surmounted by a small cross, while beneath were the hearts of Jesus and Mary. “ Wear this medal,” “ *Porte cette médaille,*” said the same voice as before, “ and you will have my especial protection ; and try and make others wear it also, and especially those who are in any particular need.”

The celestial visitant then reproached the nun with not having taken the trouble to find her medal of the Immaculate Conception, similiar to the one then held before her, which had been

given her shortly before, and which she had lost. She to whom this admonition was administered remembered that in truth the preceding month a medal had been given her of the exact pattern of the one she then saw ; and she remembered also that she had lost this medal, and had been at no pains to try and find the same, ignoring as she did alike its origin and the effects attributed to it. The facts of this vision were vouched for by the priest who was spiritual director of the Convent of Notre-Dame des Ermites at the time.

CHAPTER II.



WE now come to what is, perhaps, the most striking episode in connection with the medal called miraculous, namely, the conversion of the Jew, Alphonse Ratisbonne. This young man, whose conversion may be compared to that of St. Paul, before setting out for the East decided to visit Rome. But it was in spite of himself, so to speak, that he thus decided, for he was a fierce hater of Christianity, and this hatred on his part had been intensified by the conversion to the Catholic Faith of his brother, Théodore Ratisbonne, who was at that time a priest in Paris, and sub-director of the Arch-confraternity of Notre-Dame des Victoires. No sooner was Alphonse Ratisbonne in Rome than he wished to be out of it. In going through the ghetto his anti-Christian sentiments asserted themselves more fiercely than ever. An old school friend of his, Baron Gustave de Buissière, who was a Protestant, happened to be in Rome at the time. These two had often tried to persuade each other, "*Juif encrouté*" and "*Protestant enragé*" being the epithets mutually exchanged.

One day M. Ratisbonne, being resolved not to remain longer in Rome, set forth with the intention of wishing his friend good-bye. Through a servant's mistake he was shown into the presence of his friend's brother, Baron Théodore de Buissière, a fervent Catholic. The conversation turned upon religion, and M. de Buissière began at once to try and convert his visitor. The visitor, outwardly affable while inwardly irate, gave his interlocutor to understand that he was born a Jew and intended to remain one. Nothing daunted, the Baron then offered to give M. Ratisbonne a medal—no other than the “miraculous medal.” The son of Israel could not conceal his astonishment, and but with difficulty, his indignation. Of course he refused the medal.

“I cannot understand your refusal,” pursued M. de Buissière, “since, from what you say, this medal must be a matter of perfect indifference to you, whereas to me it would afford the greatest consolation were you to accede to my wish and accept it.”

“Since you seem so much in earnest,” said the other, “I cannot refuse to comply with your request.” This did not prevent him, however, during the remainder of the interview, from laughing and indulging in jokes at the expense of Christianity. He went away with the medal in his pocket, though with difficulty able to conceal his ill humour. “I wonder what he would say,” said

the Jew to himself, "If I were to take it into my head to make him recite my Jewish prayers."

This was on January 16th, 1842. That night Alphonse Ratisbonne was prayed for by more than one. Among those whose prayers were enlisted in his favour was the Marquis de la Ferronnays, whom Mrs. Augustus Craven in *Récit d'une sœur* has introduced to us as her father.

The Marquis de la Ferronnays died the next day, after predicting that the man for whom so many prayers were thus suddenly being offered would become a Catholic.

In the meantime M. Ratisbonne's views seemed in no way modified. He called the following day on Baron Théodore de Bussièrre to tell him that he intended leaving Rome that night. The Baron with difficulty dissuaded him from his purpose and induced him to remain a few days longer. During these few days he acted as cicerone to his new friend, accompanying him to different places of interest in Rome. The Jew meanwhile made no effort to check his gibes and sarcasms at the expense of everything Christian.

We are on January 20th. It was a Thursday and about one o'clock, and M. de Bussièrre, on his way to the church of St. Andrea delle Fratte, met M. Ratisbonne. He asked him to accompany him, and the two entered the church together. Leaving his companion, as he thought, intent on examining the building, the Baron passed through to the

convent beyond in order to speak to the monks concerning the funeral of the Marquis de la Ferronnays, which was to take place there the next day. On coming back, twelve minutes afterwards, he looked in vain for M. Ratisbonne. At last he perceived him in a side chapel, prostrate, with his face to the ground. He spoke to him and touched him, but could obtain no answer.

At length the prone man looked up ; and then, his face bathed in tears, his clasped hands, and his inability to speak, told that he had that to say which words were weak to express.

“ Oh, how M. de la Ferronnays must have prayed for me ! ” he said at last.

When M. de Buissière, eager for information, had drawn his friend outside the church, he had to judge from signs, for M. Ratisbonne refused to tell in words what had happened to him. He could only say : “ Lead me whither you will. After what I have seen I can but obey.” Then, drawing forth the medal which he had reluctantly carried about with him for some days previously, he pressed it to his lips murmuring over it burning words of gratitude and love. Amid the broken utterances of this man shaken by strong emotion, the following sentences came forth :—“ How good God is.” “ What joy until now unknown ! ” “ How great is my happiness ! ” and, “ How those are to be pitied who do not believe ! ”

M. Ratisbonne refused to be more explicit until

at the feet of one of God's ministers. "Take me to a priest," he said. He was led to the Rev. Father Villefort, S.J., of the Church of the *Gesù*. Then, on his knees and still clasping the medal, which he kept pressing to his lips, he exclaimed: "I have seen her!—I have seen her!" ("*Je l'ai vue!—Je l'ai vue!*")

He then related as follows: "I had been but a minute or two in the church when I became a prey to an indescribable feeling of distress. When I looked up the whole building around seemed to have disappeared. I could only see one chapel, which had, as it were, gathered all light unto itself, and there, in the midst of the light, standing on an altar, beautiful and majestic, was the Blessed Virgin Mary as represented on this medal. I was drawn towards her as by an irresistible impulse. She made a sign to me to kneel down, and then seemed to say: 'That is well' ('*C'est bien*'). She did not speak, but I understood everything."

It is worth while to mention that the chapel in which this vision took place was dedicated to St. Michael, and contained no picture or statue of the Blessed Virgin.

M. Ratisbonne found it difficult to enter into further details. Questioned afresh, he expressed himself at a loss to account for the, as it were, involuntary impulse which had led him to go from the right side of the church, where M. de Buissière had left him, to the left, where the chapel dedicated

to St. Michael was situated. He said that at first he had looked at the Blessed Virgin in the radiance of her glory and immaculate purity, but that afterwards he had found it impossible to gaze fully upon her. Thrice he attempted to raise his eyes to her, and each time his glance failed to reach higher than her hands. "I could not give an idea in words," he said, "of the mercy and liberality I felt to be expressed in those hands. It was not only rays of light that I saw escaping thence. Words fail to give an idea of the ineffable gifts that flow from those hands of our Mother! The mercy, the tenderness, and the wealth of Heaven escape thence in torrents on the souls of those whom Mary protects."

The baptism of Alphonse Ratisbonne took place in the Church of the *Gesù* in presence of the *élite* of Roman society. Abbé Dupanloup, afterwards the great Bishop of Orleans, preaching on the occasion, said: "O you, on whom all eyes are fixed at this moment, tell us by what secret ways the Lord has led you hither. It is for you to tell us how the sun of truth first rose in your soul and what was its brilliant dawn." In an eloquent apostrophe to the Blessed Virgin he exclaimed: "*Quæ est ista?*" "You are the Mother of our Saviour," he continued, "and Jesus, the fruit of your womb, is the God blessed of all ages. As child of Adam you are our sister. *Soror nostra es.* You are the masterpiece of the Power Divine and

His mercy's sweetest smile. O God, give light to the blind that they may see Mary, and hearts to those without hearts, that they may love her."

Received in audience by the Sovereign Pontiff, M. Ratisbonne was admitted to His Holiness's bedchamber in order that he might see there on a wall near the bed a beautiful picture of the Immaculate Conception as represented by the "Miraculous Medal."

Gregory XVI. ordered a canonical examination to be made of the circumstances attending this remarkable conversion, the result of which was the declaration by Cardinal Patrizzi (June 3rd, 1842) "that the perfect and instantaneous conversion of Alphonse Marie Ratisbonne from Judaism to the Catholic faith was a true and signal miracle wrought by the all-good and all-great God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Alphonse Ratisbonne became a priest and fellow-worker with his brother, Abbé Théodore Ratisbonne, in the foundation of the work known as *L'Œuvre de Notre-Dame de Sion*, from which were to be born two religious congregations now spread over the world. Forty years after the vision at Rome he died at Jerusalem with the name, Mary, on his lips.

Coming to Paris after his conversion he felt a strong wish to see Sister Catherine Labouré. The Archbishop of Paris had expressed a similar wish. To no purpose in either case, for the privileged

daughter of St. Vincent of Paul clung tenaciously to her anonymity, and, intent on the menial offices which she called the pearls of a Sister of Charity, remained concealed behind the humble Sister Catherine to the end of her days.

CHAPTER III.

WE must look back. We have seen the medal called miraculous doing its work as a harbinger of grace and a forerunner of conversions ; we shall now see something of the effect it had in connection with the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. That it conduced to the promulgation of that dogma is distinctly stated in the Papal Rescript of July, 1893, granting a feast in honour of the Apparition of which the “ Miraculous Medal ” was the reflex.

The first important step in the direction we are indicating was that taken by Mgr. de Quélen when in 1838, he petitioned the Holy See to allow the feast of the Immaculate Conception to be celebrated in the diocese of Paris. Gregory XVI. acceded to the request, and, in a Papal Rescript, authorised the celebration of the solemnity with the addition of *Et te in Immaculata Conceptione* to the Preface of the Mass.

The following year another Papal Rescript was received by Mgr. de Quélen in reply to that prelate's

request that *Regina sine labe concepta* might be added to the Litany of Loretto.

In the December of the same year the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated with great pomp in all the churches of the diocese of Paris, but especially at Notre-Dame.

To point out the connection existing between the revelation of the medal called miraculous and the increase of the devotional movement in favour of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it will suffice to cite the following fact. A statue of the Blessed Virgin in bronze, representing Sister Catherine's vision, and surrounded by lights and flowers, occupied a place of honour in the Paris Cathedral on the day when the feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated there for the first time.

The example thus set by the Archbishop of Paris was quickly followed by other French prelates. Foremost among those who between the years 1839 and 1841 obtained for their respective dioceses the same privileges that Mgr. de Quélan had recently obtained for his, were the Archbishops of Toulouse, Bourges, Lyons, Rouen, and Bordeaux, and the Bishops of Montauban, Pamiers, Carcassone, Fréjus, Châlons, Saint-Fleur, Limoges, Besançon, Bayeux, Evreux, Séez, Coutances, St. Dié, La Rochelle, Tulle, Ajaccio, Nantes, Amiens, Versailles, Nîmes, Luçon, Mende, and Périgueux.

It is easy to see that this action on the part of

the French episcopate must have given a decided incentive to the movement that was going on throughout the Catholic world in favour of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

We have now reached more than the middle of the century, and can look round on a phase of Catholicism that is refreshing compared with the arid state of Christianity in France during the years immediately preceding 1830.

There is by this time a fresh agent at work in the spreading far and near of the medal called miraculous: it is no other than the Association of Children of Mary, canonically erected, under the direction of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, and soon, by its network of branch associations, to extend over Christendom. This body, which constitutes one of the modest and hidden forces of the Church, arraying as it does in countless phalanxes the flower of the young Catholic womanhood of different countries, owes its origin, if not to the practical initiative of Sister Catherine Labouré, at least to one of those interior communications from Heaven with which she believed herself to be from time to time favoured.

In 1856, a high altar commemorative of the Apparitions was erected in the community chapel of the Sisters of Charity of the Rue du Bac, and above it a tall statue of the Immaculate Conception, reflecting Sister Catherine's vision, took its place.

The altar and the statue had been carved out of two blocks of white marble presented shortly before by the French Government to the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul in gratitude for their services at the time of the great cholera epidemic. Altar and statue, as then erected, invite visitors and pilgrims at the present day.

According to one of Sister Catherine's predictions all who prayed before this altar were to receive signal graces, and especially that of purity of heart.

CHAPTER IV.

WE will here glance at Sister Catherine Labouré. She is entering upon the autumn of life, and sees fecundity attending the different celestial communications which she had believed herself called upon to transmit to the world. Unknown to that world, and, in a sense, unknown to those who sat with her at the same board, and necessarily reticent on the great subject on which those round about her spoke freely, she, like Mary in the home at Nazareth, had to ponder things silently and lovingly in her heart. Circumstances and character had made of her a Sister of Charity silent and reserved and grave and sweet.

It was not to be expected that a being so privileged in a spiritual sense could be exempt from trial and suffering. Such an exemption in her case would have marred the harmony of her life as a militant Christian. Heaven sent her crosses which she accepted and carried simply and unostentatiously as it was in her nature to do. There was nothing outwardly in her spiritual life to distinguish her from those among whom she

lived, if we except her singularly reverent manner of saying the rosary, and if we except also the virtues of simplicity and humility practised by her in an unusual degree in the everyday things of life. By the way, the somewhat strong will and quick temper that had characterised her in her girlhood had long since been chastened by the most perfect abnegation and submission.

Her daily task until the end consisted in the tending of the aged and infirm inmates of the Hospice d'Enghien. She had sufficient time on her hands, however, to allow of her attending to a dairy and poultry yard besides. Thus, falling into the sere and yellow leaf, we see her surrounded by feathered tribes as in the days of her childhood.

Rather above the middle height, and with regular features, her appearance was in every sense pleasing. Her eyes were blue and remarkable in expression. "Something of heaven was reflected in their gaze," were the words we heard from the lips of an aged Sister of Charity who had long lived under the same roof with Sister Catherine.

We have said nothing of this privileged woman's occasional power of foreseeing the future. Yet, the prophetic spirit by which she was animated was evinced by her on numerous occasions. Many are the proofs existing of her predictions having been verified to the letter.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER twenty years have passed, and our medal has gained for itself more than one note in history. Priests and Sisters of Charity whose duty it was to minister to the dying and the sick, relate marvels in connection with it during the Algerian, Crimean, and American wars. It had its place on the breasts of officers as of common soldiers. Marshal Bugeaud wore it during his eighteen campaigns in Africa, and after his death the little medal that had thus accompanied him in his heroic exploits on different fields of battle was set in gold and laid at the feet of the Madonna of the Church of Notre-Dame d'Afrique. It is to be seen there now. Marshal de Saint-Arnaud wore it at the battle of the Alma, and Marshal Pélissier at the siege of Sebastopol. And what episodes do we not read concerning it in connection with the Franco-German war?—episodes some of which must have gladdened the sore-tried heart of Sister Catherine Labouré, who, holy Sister of Charity that she was, was also a Frenchwoman, and as

such suffered much from the woes then befalling her country.

On her returning, in May 1871, with the other members of her community to the Hospice d'Enghien and to the House of Providence of Reuilly, everything there was found to be in perfect order, and just as when the Sisters had vacated the premises ; though these premises had in the meantime been occupied by a band of lawless and infuriated Communists, bent on destruction and plunder. A state of things so unexpected under the circumstances was the exact fulfilment of one of Sister Catherine's predictions.

The good Sister's time on earth was drawing to a close. Though she had not yet reached the allotted three score years and ten, infirmities were breaking her up. As the end drew near, she became more communicative with a favoured few on the subject of her visions. Her humility in this matter remained a striking characteristic to the last. She was wont to say, "The Blessed Virgin chose me because I was so foolish and ignorant, in order that none might doubt."

The end came on December 31st, 1876. Sister Catherine had no death agony, and her end was peaceful as that of a child. Although she was beloved by all, and although she had long been looked upon by the community of Reuilly as the guardian angel of their house, no tears were shed by those who saw her die. Tears seemed out of

place in presence of a death so beautiful and so privileged. By special permission, she was buried in a vault beneath the community chapel of the House of Providence, which was separated by a garden only from the Hospice d'Enghien, where she had breathed her last. Her body was borne to its last resting place, followed by a large concourse of people. The funeral *cortège* was headed by a band of white-veiled Children of Mary in white. All moved forward to the strains of the *Benedictus*. On reaching the chapel, the Children of Mary took their places round the open vault. As the coffin was lowered lovingly into the earth, the words which had been on Sister Catherine's lips, and in her heart for forty-six years, were intoned with melodious sweetness over her grave:—"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

The medal—the "miraculous medal"—which the deceased had worn for so many years, was at her death, given to the Duchesse de Magenta, wife of Marshal MacMahon, at that time President of the Republic. It was but a poor copper one, but she to whom it was given, received it as a relic, and had it set in finest gold. More than a quarter of a century has passed since Sister Catherine's death; we are in another age, and newer forms of devotion have arisen. But the "miraculous medal" still holds sway. It has its place on the breasts of Lourdes pilgrims, as on those of the great pauper band—sometwo thousand strong—who twice a week

meet at the basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, to be evangelized and fed. Sisters of Charity, as heretofore, still use it as one of their great means of winning souls.

In July, 1897, the personality of Sister Catherine was again brought into relief by the crowning, in the name of Leo XIII., of the statue now known as that of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in the Chapel of the Sisters of Charity of the Rue du Bac. The crown, which is of gold and platinum, studded with pearls and diamonds, measures sixty-three centimètres in circumference. Some of the phases of the history of the "miraculous medal" are portrayed in the medallions round its base. One represents the conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne. Above these rise nine diamond stars, representing the nine choirs of Angels, and above these, and forming the points of the crown, nine diamond lilies, representing the Immaculate reigning over Angels and men.

Finally we will glance at Sister Catherine as awaiting the day when she will take her place among those of earth's children, beatified by the voice of the Church, for the cause of her beatification has already been introduced at Rome.

Pilgrims visit her tomb. It is a humble one, with nothing about it in the way of lights or ornaments, that might seem to forestall the Church's judgment respecting the heroic virtue, while on earth, of her whose ashes lie beneath. Yet, the



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SISTER CATHERINE LABOURÉ.
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AFTER DEATH.

impression prevails that Sister Catherine was a saint. On the slab of marble, covering her remains beneath the community chapel of the House of Providence of Reuilly, the following words might be inscribed:—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

PART II.

Notre-Dame des Victoires.

PART II.

The Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

CHAPTER I.

DURING the Godless first thirty years of the nineteenth century there was one Paris church more deserted than others. It was that of Notre-Dame des Victoires, commonly known as that of the Petits-Pères. Unimposing in outward aspect as it was, few troubled to know its history ; yet it had a history.

Louis XIII. had built it in gratitude for his victory over the Protestants at La Rochelle, and had dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin under the invocation of Notre-Dame des Victoires. He had built it as a conventual church for a community of Augustinian monks, known as the Petits-Pères, whose monastery soon grew up beside it. It quickly became a home of sanctity and a radiating centre of good works. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when lewdness and Godlessness were often rampant in high places, privileged souls used to go there and pray. The names of Anne of Austria and Marie Leczinska

have entered into its history. The spot in the tribune where the holy wife of Louis XV. used to go and pray is still shown.

The Revolution, with its horrors, passing over the building, we see for a short time the business of the Paris Bourse transacted within its walls.

When order was restored, we find it a parish church, its conventual character having disappeared during the general upheaval. During the first thirty years of the nineteenth century it was, as has been said, distinguished among other Paris churches for its barrenness in spiritual things. It had fallen so low, in a religious sense, as to become at times a resort for open profligacy.

Such was the state of things about the year 1836. The parish priest of Notre-Dame des Victoires at that time was M. Des Genettes, a man after God's own heart. He, like his church, seemed a butt for the irreligion around. He even seemed an especial target for the bitter anti-clericalism of the period. His efforts to do good appeared fruitless. His church was all but deserted. His parishioners died without the sacraments. In the humility of his heart he reproached himself for this state of things and begged to be relieved of his cure, a request to which Mgr. de Quélen, the Archbishop of Paris at the time, turned a deaf ear.

Day and night, with uplifted hands and often with tears, M. Des Genettes prayed God for his degenerate flock. This went on for four years.

Heaven seemed deaf to his entreaties, but it was not so. At length an answer came. This was on December 3rd, 1836. M. Des Genettes was in his church celebrating the Holy Sacrifice at the Altar of the Blessed Virgin--the one soon to be known throughout the world as that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners. He was at the *Judica me Deus* when the sense of his unworthiness and of the uselessness of his efforts struck him in an unusual degree. The idea became all-absorbing and poignant. "You do nothing." "Your ministry is without result." "In the four years that you have been here what good have you done?" "For prudence's sake you had better give up and withdraw." Thoughts such as these, framed in these words, and as if suggested by an unseen tempter, continued to disturb him. Battling with them as best he could, and a prey the while to indescribable emotion and distress, the good priest continued the Mass until he came to the *Sanctus*. Then, gathering up his thoughts and collecting himself as by a supreme effort, he raised his eyes to the cross above the altar and said: "My God, deliver me from this terrible distraction." Hardly had the prayer proceeded from his heart than, in the recesses of his being, he heard the words: "Consecrate thy parish to the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary." At once the distress and the distracting thoughts vanished, and in calm and perfect peace he pro-

ceeded to consecrate the elements. He remained in this state during the continuation of the Holy Sacrifice. When in the sacristy afterwards, performing his act of thanksgiving, the distracting thoughts and the distress of mind seemed about to return. He had not time to wrestle with them before the same voice as at the altar, sounding in his soul, repeated the same words : "Consecrate thy parish to the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary."

The priest was not slow to recognise the supernatural character of this injunction, formal, distinct, and twice heard, not with the ear of sense, but in his inmost being. But, fearing a delusion through his own weakness and the machinations of the Evil One, he hesitated in responding to what he felt to be a message from Heaven. On the contrary, he tried to battle with his impressions. In this state of mind, weary with the contest and with the emotions of the morning, he went home.

There, almost the first thing he did was to begin to draw up the statutes of an association in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners. He was some hours at the task. The result was the statutes, almost as they now exist, of the great Archconfraternity of which the church of Notre Dame des Victoires is the centre. In acting thus the priest had not been guided by conviction or resolution so much as by the necessity of obeying the inward impulse urging him to act. Thus had M. Des Genettes by a few

strokes of the pen, so to speak, set in movement a vast piece of spiritual machinery which was to revive in a momentous manner the neglected and almost forgotten devotion to the Heart of Mary. By his means this devotion was to flourish in the nineteenth century as it had flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when in France alone it numbered as many as fifty-three associations in its honour. That in all this M. Des Genettes was, almost in spite of himself, a human instrument in a divine work, is more clearly evinced by the following admission on the part of the venerable priest. He says: "Though accustomed from my earliest years to revere the Blessed Virgin as the tenderest of mothers I understood nothing of the devotion to her Sacred Heart." He admits having once heard a sermon on the subject by a certain Father Macarthy, which sermon, instead of converting him to the devotion in question, left him even prejudiced against it. "I vainly sought in it," he says, "something to respond to my aspirations. It seemed to me but a vague mysticism alike unable to occupy the attention or satisfy the heart."

As he sat with pen in hand drawing up the statutes of the new association on that memorable day, December 3rd, 1836, he says that mists disappeared from his mind, and that the subject became to him perfectly clear.

Thus was conceived the now famous Archcon-

fraternity in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was about to be launched into definite being. Seven days later the statutes were submitted to the Archbishop of Paris, who approved of them and gave permission for the confraternity to begin its work at once.

This confraternity was at first as an infant in the arms of its human founder, M. Des Genettes. Though now strong with the sense of a supernatural work commanded by Heaven devolving upon him, the good priest was far from feeling confident that success in a human sense would attend his first efforts. These were to be put forward the following day, Sunday, December 11th.

Preaching on the morrow at the parochial Mass and before a very scanty congregation, the pastor unfolded his project. He said that he wished those who heard him and as many more as possible to meet in the church that evening and pray for the conversion of sinners. Thus was the first seed sown of those Sunday evening gatherings at Notre-Dames des Victoires, which have continued until now.

He who had just sown this seed wondered whether as many as fifty would answer to his call. A joyful surprise awaited him. In the evening, at the hour fixed, he saw before him a goodly gathering of people, including many men. How this assembly had been brought together remained a mystery to all concerned.

During the office of Vespers of the Blessed Virgin the attitude of the congregation was that of indifference rather than of piety. In the course of the sermon that followed by M. Des Genettes the people began to show signs of interest and attention. At the office of Benediction they evinced even fervour. This was particularly noticeable during the singing of the Litany of Loretto. At the words *Refugium peccatorum ora pro nobis* all present, as by an irresistible impulse, went on their knees, and as if by common consent repeated the invocation three times. It was a cry of passionate entreaty for the conversion of sinners.

The pastor of the flock shared the general emotion. When the Litany was finished, with gratitude in his heart and with tears streaming from his eyes, he looked up at the statue of the Blessed Virgin surmounting her altar, and now known far and wide as that of Notre-Dame des Victoires; and, with that daring in the things of God sometimes possessed by persons of lively faith, he ventured to make terms with Heaven. Appealing by voice and look to the unseen world, and addressing her whom the statue before him represented, he said: "You have heard these accents of faith and love: you will not refuse to save these poor sinners who call you their mother. O Mary, adopt this association as your own, and, as a pledge of this adoption, obtain, I beseech you,

the conversion of M. Joly, to whom I will go to-morrow in your name."

The congregation separated that Sunday evening feeling that something important had been done.

The M. Joly whose conversion had been asked for as a sign had been one of the ministers of Louis XVIII. He was then more than eighty years of age and nearly blind, but with his intellectual faculties in full vigour. Cradled in the Atheism of the eighteenth century, he had grown old in unbelief. His disbelief in Christian doctrine had been open and avowed. In the hope of winning him to better things, M. Des Genettes had called upon him more than once, but had each time been refused admittance. Now according to his request and promise in the church, he was about to make another attempt.

This time, though with some difficulty, he succeeded in gaining admission to M. Joly's presence. The all but blind old man received him politely, but that was all. After a few moments the ice began to thaw. M. Des Genettes had probably never been more surprised than by the following words : "*Monsieur l'Abbé* since you have been here I have felt a peace and an interior joy such as I have never known before. What good you are doing me ! Will you give me your blessing ?"

The ice was now thoroughly broken. When M. Des Genettes took his leave, M. Joly had partially made his confession. Absolution was

reserved for the following day. The communion that followed was very like a first communion. Thus was the record of a godless life at once wiped out, and an octogenarian, with one foot in the grave, almost launched into Paradise. Each day brought fresh graces and holiness to the regenerated old man, until he died a few months later the death of the just.

This conversion is in a two-fold sense worth dwelling upon. Taking place, as it did, on December 12th, it must be regarded as the first fruits of the association which had been canonically erected two days before, and had come into active being the evening before. It moreover was the conversion asked for that evening before, by M. Des Genettes, as a sign and a proof, and in presence of his newly-gathered flock. It is also significant in another way. It seems to point out to us what was to be the especial line of the new association in the domain of prayer, and what were to be the graces accruing to souls in consequence. This does not mean that the shrine of Notre-Dame des Victoires was not to become a world-famous centre for the obtaining of blessings of every kind. Yet it remains true that this signal spot has from the first been especially connected with graces in the way of conversions, and that from it emanates an almost palpable influence in winning souls to God.

M. Des Genettes' priestly soul rejoiced in M. Poly's conversion. Each day brought him fresh

signs of the spiritual regeneration going on in his parish.

Trial and contradiction were not wanting to the new work. A blast of opposition blew upon it and the infant association, as well as its founder, had to contend with calumny and injustice. Outsiders scoffed, and pointed to what they called revived mediævalism in their midst. Ecclesiastics, for the most part, stood coldly aloof in presence of what was to them a decided innovation in spiritual things. Even the Archbishop of Paris, at first, so amenable, refused all active sympathy with M. Des Genettes, and declined to accede to a wish recently expressed by the good priest, to the effect that the new association might be erected into an Archconfraternity for the whole of France.

The curé of Notre-Dame des Victoires, however, continued to nurse this his latest-born desire. Before long two Cardinals came in his way. To them he unfolded his plan, and he won them so much to his way of thinking, that they promised to plead his cause at Rome. He was soon, however, informed that the favour he asked was one which Rome seldom granted, and which would be refused even to the Archbishop of Paris, were that prelate to ask it, for his cathedral church of Notre-Dame. Nothing daunted, M. Des Genettes continued to hope and to pray.

Soon a lady came on the scene, and proved more effectual in obtaining what the priest wished, than

two princes of the church had been. This lady was no other than the Princess Borghese, then living in Rome. Hearing of the wish, nearest M. Des Genettes' heart, and of the difficulties surrounding him, she undertook to lay the matter before the Sovereign Pontiff. "What!" said Gregory XVI. on seeing her, "another favour to ask?" He heard the request, and then not only granted it, but did so with an extension of privileges that had not been even dreamed of by M. Des Genettes. By Papal Brief he at once raised the new association to the dignity of an Archconfraternity, not only for the whole of France as requested, but for the entire world. From that time, to use the holy founder's words, the history of the Archconfraternity became a continuous hymn of praise, proclaiming the power and mercy of the Virgin Mother.

Now with powers and privileges for the entire world the nations came to it. England had come to it six months before in the person of the Hon. George Spencer, known in religion as Father Ignatius of St. Paul. This was in the October of 1837, when the association was not yet a year old. The illustrious convert and Passionist, begging prayers for the conversion of his country, as others beg money for holy things, found his way one day to the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Ignoring recent events in connection with that church, he was there with the sole object of enlisting prayers for England. His conversation with

M. Des Genettes was to be fertile in results. In that hour Catholic England was to become united to the shrine of Notre-Dame des Victoires by a bond of prayer which has remained unsevered until now. The conversion of Albion became at once one of the permanent intentions of the Archconfraternity.

We shall now see what seem to be the almost immediate results of this interview between the devout French priest and the noble English Passionist. About nine months afterwards M. Des Genettes received a letter from England in which the following passages occurred: "In the many conversions to the Catholic faith taking place around us, we are daily witnesses of events as consolatory as they are astonishing. And we find that the same thing is going on all over England. In the last ten months there have been more Protestants here converted to the Catholic faith than there had been in the previous ten years. We bless God for the great mercy He is thus showing our country, though we are ignorant of the means He has employed to bring about these results. We are told that there is an association recently founded in France, the members of which pray for England. Do you know of such a one?" The French priest understood. To him it was no secret whence came the sudden gust of grace that was blowing so many Anglicans into the fold of Christ. This striking series of conversions in

England had commenced with the opening of the apostolate of prayer for our country at the Paris shrine.

This and the good work going on at home by similar means so encouraged M. Des Genettes as to induce him to start his *Manuel*, a publication having for object to make known the marvels of divine grace being wrought in connection with his still infant Archconfraternity. The *Manuel* quickly made its way into our country, with the result that its author began receiving letters almost at once from different parts of England telling of graces received and asking for prayers at the Paris shrine. M. Des Genettes' next idea was that confraternities in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners should be started in England and aggregated to the parent one in Paris.

His suggestion was at first responded to by English Catholics with some hesitation. These, only just emerging into the twilight of liberty, feared that a public form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin might afford a handle to their enemies.

M. Des Genettes replied that the great act of apostasy of which England had been guilty demanded on her part a great public act of reparation. "You admit," he said, "that a number of conversions have lately taken place among you, and you attribute them to the intervention of the Blessed Virgin. These conversions

are but the forerunners of others more numerous and more startling. The Anglican heresy is on the decline. To destroy it, there needs but a stroke from Her who has hitherto conquered all heresies. Plant then the banner of the Immaculate Heart of Mary through the length and breadth of England."

M. Des Genettes ceased urging, and fell to praying with the members of his Archconfraternity. The result was soon seen. A community of Benedictine nuns, at Princethorpe, near Rugby, founded an association in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and applied for its affiliation to the mother one in Paris. This was the first act of public devotion in England in honour of the Blessed Virgin since the so-called Reformation. Very soon afterwards three similar associations were founded in three separate parishes by a zealous Carthusian monk, who at the same time made a surprising number of converts to the Catholic faith. This was in 1841. The son of St. Bruno, whose apostolate on English soil had thus been crowned with such extraordinary success, has revealed to us one of his methods of procedure. It was that, as member of the great Paris Archconfraternity, he worked with the treasures at his command in the shape of the prayers and good works of his fellow associates. These he was continually offering to Heaven, asking, in return, the success of his earthly work.

M. Des Genettes says that, by the foundation of these confraternities and by the many recent

conversions effected in England, the Blessed Virgin had again taken possession of her ancient dowry. He says, moreover, on this subject:—
“All these graces are but a prelude to what she is about to do for a people too guilty in the past with respect to God and too ungrateful with respect to herself not to call for her special mercy and compassion.” *

These confraternities were quickly followed by others with the same aim and the same title, which in the next four or five years increased to more than a hundred. We are in presence of an astounding fact. We see the Catholic Church in England proclaiming, in the face of a country rampant with heresy, its hope and confidence in Mary Refuge of Sinners.

We will here look back a little. When Father Ignatius Spencer in 1837 had his memorable interview with M. Des Genettes, the religious atmosphere in England was apparently calm. English Catholics were far from ready to assert themselves or attract public notice. Their chapels were, for the most part, rooms, and the cross dared not shew itself outside. How changed the scene at once became is a fact of history to which there is no shutting one's eye. Apart from the many conversions and the institution of the confraternities to which we have alluded, Catholic Churches began to rise in different parts of England.

* *Annales de l'Archiconfrerie de N.-D. des Victoires*, Feb., 1847.

By this time the cross dared to shew itself outside.

To us, looking back over a period of more than sixty years, it is easy to attribute the wave of grace passing over our country immediately after 1837 to the action of prayer abroad for England's conversion, organised by Father Ignatius Spencer and emanating in an especial manner from the Paris shrine of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

That English Churchmen of that time saw matters thus, is evident from the letters of certain of them to M. Des Genettes; and the fact that their impressions in this respect were shared by persons outside the Church, is brought home to us by a letter written by Dr. Pusey, in which the eminent Anglican expresses a fear lest the prayers of Catholicism on the Continent should succeed in wresting from the Anglican communion members which that communion was not worthy to retain.

The influence of prayer on the Catholic movement in England at that time was understood by no one better than by Bishop Wiseman, who, in one of his letters to M. Des Genettes, said:—"The beginning of England's return to the true faith is due to prayer, and it is prayer that will complete the work."

A French priest, other than M. Des Genettes, here comes on the scene. This is M. Martin de Moirlien, curé of the church of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas in Paris, who was at Oxford in 1844 or

1845, and who there came in contact with some of the leading men of the Oxford movement, the secession of some of whom to Rome then seemed imminent. Certain among them constituted him the bearer to the curé of Notre-Dame des Victoires of a message which had the character of a profession of faith. It ran thus :—" Tell Father Des Genettes that we are devoted heart and soul to the Pope, that we pray in union with him, and that we recite the Roman breviary daily. Tell him that more than three hundred of us are of this way of thinking and that we are anxiously awaiting the day when we may make a public avowal of our faith." More to the same effect followed. " Say all this to Father Des Genettes as coming from us," said these Anglicans, " and beg him to continually enlist in our favour the prayers of his Archconfraternity."

In 1845, Bishop Wiseman was in Paris, charged with the task of making another formal appeal for prayer to the Catholics of France. In an interview with M. Des Genettes, he assured the latter of the good the Archconfraternity in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was doing in England. The venerable pastor of Notre-Dame des Victoires, alluding from the pulpit to this visit, said :—" Ah, brethren, would that you too could have heard the words that came from the lips of this second Chrysostom. Your charity towards, and the interest you have taken in, our Catholic brethren in England

would have been well rewarded." This was in the autumn of 1845. By the end of the following January, no less than sixty members of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had joined the Catholic Church. Foremost among the converts was John Henry Newman. Oakeley, Faber, Dalgairns, and others destined to be signal lights to English Catholicism, were of the band. On this subject, we again recur to M. Des Genettes, who tells us that numerous were the letters he had been receiving from England for some time previously, asking for prayers for Newman at the Paris shrine. When soon afterwards, the illustrious convert passed through Paris on his way to Rome, he went to the Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, as an act of thanksgiving. We have been seeing as by a side light, the influence of the great Paris Archconfraternity, on the movement of English Catholicism. We must now see what this same Archconfraternity has been doing elsewhere.

Responding by its action to the idea of the Sovereign Pontiff Gregory XVI., in erecting it as an Archconfraternity for the entire world, it at once sped onward, so that even before it had had time to be known throughout France, it was already evangelizing in China and America. It quickly aggregated to itself the principal parishes in France. In 1846, it possessed as many as 7,164 confraternities, numbering in all upwards of 641,542 members.

For a long time, this network of associations was kept in perfect working order by the brain and energy of a single man. M. Des Genettes was equal to the task. Among the means he employed were, the *Manuel* already alluded to, and a publication he had started, known as the *Annales de l'Archiconfrérie de Notre-Dame des Victoires*.

The *Manuel* ran through forty editions in a few years. Its task as well as that of the "Annals" was to relate in all simplicity and truth, some of the marvels in the way of conversions, physical cures, and graces of every kind, that were constantly being effected by the prayers of the Archconfraternity. Literature of this kind is familiar to Catholics of the present day ; to those of fifty and sixty years ago, it was new in matter as in form.

While devotion to Notre-Dame des Victoires was thus making for itself right of home in France, from north to south, and from east to west, it was spreading with equal rapidity through the whole of the west of Europe. From Poland to Spain, and from Italy to Belgium, Notre-Dame des Victoires was being familiarly invoked. Genoa, the *citta di Maria*, rich in its fifty sanctuaries in honour of the Immaculate, was ready to affiliate all these shrines to the great Paris one. And so with respect to Florence, Naples and Rome. Rome did more. It erected a church in honour of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

The action of Rome upon the Paris shrine in

the persons of its Sovereign Pontiffs had been marked from the beginning. In 1842 Gregory XVI. had presented the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires with the body of a young virgin-martyr, Aurelia, which had been taken from the catacomb of St. Priscilla a few weeks before. The relics were placed at once beneath the altar of the Archconfraternity. Pius IX. followed in the footsteps of his predecessor in conferring favours on the Paris shrine. Fresh indulgences were poured upon it with a lavish hand. In fact, in this matter it was, by about the year 1865, one of the richest churches in the world outside Rome. It was to the Roman Pontiff a spot of predilection. Concerning it Pius IX. used to say : " Make it known everywhere, for it is the work of God." To Mgr. Monnet, Bishop of Pella, he said on one occasion : " The Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the work of God. It is of Divine inspiration. It will be a resource for the Church."

CHAPTER II.

DWELLING on the remarkable progress of the association¹ during the lifetime of M. Des Genettes, we are tempted to cull from the "Annals" and from the Manual the substance of one or more of those marvels which had come within the founder's personal knowledge and which are given us by his pen. We will pause before one of those characteristic favours with which the records of the Archconfraternity abound—one of those silent unobtrusive conquests of grace in the working out of which behind human things and circumstances Divine action is distinctly visible. The case in question may be gathered from the following facts. On January 25th, 1847, Mgr. Truffet was consecrated Bishop of Calliopolis in Paris at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Preaching in that church in the evening, he begged the prayers of the Archconfraternity for a young man who had once been his pupil, whom he had lost sight of for years, but in whom he continued to be much interested. In short, it was a prodigal's

return he was asking for. This prodigal's story was told by the Bishop in a few words, and was in substance as follows.

The young man was to have been a priest, but changing his mind, had, about ten years before, come to seek his fortune in Paris. For some months he had received letters full of affectionate encouragement from his friend and former teacher, but failing to reply to these, correspondence between the two had soon ceased. In a last appeal to his hearers, Mgr. Truffet said: "Until the mercy of God has found him out, do not cease praying for him before the venerated statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires. For my part, each day at the Holy Sacrifice I will unite my prayers with yours."

On August 28th of the same year, that is, seven months later, M. Des Genettes was surprised by the abrupt entrance of a young man into his confessional. The new-comer was evidently under the influence of strong emotion. The priest reminding him of the customary formula preparatory to the Sacrament of Penance, the other replied: "I have not the slightest intention of making a confession. I have come here only to talk to you, being as I am overwhelmed by trouble and on the verge of despair."

"My friend," replied the priest in tenderest accents, "what do you want of me?"

"Advice," was the reply.

The new-comer then put forth something of his story. As it proceeded the priest became struck by points of resemblance between it and the one told in the pulpit by the newly-consecrated Bishop of Calliopolis. This impression gaining on him, he told the young man before him of the resemblance between the two cases, and ended by citing certain facts that had been put forth by Mgr. Truffet. At the last-mentioned name the kneeling prodigal started.

“Mgr. Truffet !” he exclaimed. “It is he, my former teacher and friend, and I am his ungrateful pupil.”

The stroke of grace had at last gone home. He wept at the thought of heaven’s goodness and of his friend’s fidelity. “O God, your mercy is indeed great !” he murmured.

Telling, in his after account to M. Des Genettes, how in his case virtue and honour had been shipwrecked in a course of ten year’s Paris life, he came to the fatal moment when, with despair at heart and want staring him in the face, he had resolved to commit suicide. Twice he had attempted to put an end to his life and twice he had failed in the attempt. The third time he had resolved not to fail. Going to an unfrequented spot on the water’s brink he waited for darkness in order to commit the dire act. As he waited, ideas of eternity forced themselves upon him, and with them the words of the *Miserere* came to his mind. On this

his intention to commit suicide forsook him. He left the spot and took to walking. He continued to walk aimlessly and for hours through the streets of Paris, until he found himself at the doors of Notre-Dame des Victoires. He entered the church for the first time in his life, and took his place near the altar of the Archconfraternity ; there he knelt and prayed. His conversion, however, was as yet but half complete. The night was passed by him in wrestling. The following day saw him entering abruptly M. Des Genettes' confessional. The reader knows the rest, and will not fail to see in this case of bringing back to God an answer to M. Truffet's supplication of seven months before.

A remarkable physical cure next tempts the pen. It is that of Mademoiselle Pauline Dumortier, a young lady of good family of Tournai, who for forty-five days had been suffering from an illness, which was considered hopeless by her medical men, and which each day seemed to be bringing her nearer to the grave.

On December 8th, 1843, a novena to Notre-Dame des Victoires, or, in other words, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was begun for this young lady in more than one religious community of Tournai. When the sufferer knew this hope revived within her. This hope became confidence when she heard that on the last day of the novena a well-known priest of the town was to offer Mass

for her in Paris at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

The members of her family were far from sharing her hopefulness and confidence, for she seemed each day to be getting worse. On the 15th she appeared to be dying. That day she said to the medical man in attendance: "Do you think that by human means alone I can possibly recover by eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Impossible, my child," was the reply. "I do not wish to delude you with false hope," continued the man of science. "The doctor's art cannot restore you to health, but perhaps supernatural means can. God is all-powerful, and may possess secrets of which I am ignorant." The doctor then wrote a prescription for his patient. When he was gone Mademoiselle Dumortier begged that the taking of the medicine just ordered might be postponed until the following day, her idea being to leave with Heaven, in the eyes of lookers-on, all the credit of the cure which she believed was about to take place.

We are on the 16th, the last day of the novena, and at the hour when Mass was to be offered for the sufferer at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires. The sick girl had that morning received the Last Sacraments. The members of her family were at church assisting in spirit at the Mass then being offered for their child at the privileged Paris shrine.

Mademoiselle Dumortier's words best describe what went on within her during this supreme half-hour. She says in her account: "It was about the time when the Holy Sacrifice was being offered for me; suddenly, a few minutes after eight, I felt in my whole being a commotion which I cannot describe. My body, which was paralysed, resumed its ordinary functions; the swelling caused by the dropsy from which I was suffering disappeared, together with the inflammation in my mouth and throat; and with this my loosened teeth became firm in their sockets. 'I am cured!' I exclaimed; 'I am cured!' and in an indescribable outburst of joy I kept on repeating that it was to the Blessed Virgin, and to her alone, that I owed my cure. I rose, dressed myself quickly, and went downstairs to await in the hall the members of my family, who were every moment expected home from church. How can I describe the scene that followed when they saw me? 'Pauline, my Pauline!' exclaimed my mother, in tears and clasping me in her arms. 'You were not deceived then! The Blessed Virgin has indeed cured you! Blessed a thousand times may she be for that!'"

"'My child,' said the doctor, after submitting his former patient to a close medical examination, 'there are facts before which even science must bow down. Your cure is complete. I can only explain it by concluding that there is above us a

great Doctor capable of performing miracles, and that we here below are but his weak instruments.' ”

This sudden cure on December 16th, 1843, was known and verified throughout Tournai.

Another remarkable cure about this time presents itself in connection with this part of our subject. It is that of Pierre Renault, of the Little Seminary of Versailles, a young man of about eighteen years of age studying for the priesthood. This youth was suffering from an incurable form of heart disease. One day, one of the attacks to which he was subject leading to an effusion of blood to the brain, paralysis of the eyes followed, and with it total blindness. The eyelids, losing their power, remained open ; the eyeballs, insensible to light and touch, remained fixed.

M. Noble, the ordinary medical man of the establishment, was in attendance on the sufferer ; the head doctor of the Versailles hospital was called in as well. The latter, after making a diagnosis of the case, said : “ This young man is suffering from a form of heart disease for which there is no cure. It is not only more than probable that he will never recover his sight, but also that before long death will put an end to his sufferings.”

Here Heaven was had recourse to. The two hundred pupils of the Little Seminary began a novena to Notre-Dame des Victoires for their afflicted comrade. This was on April 5th, 1843. It was deemed advisable that day to administer the

Sacrament of Extreme Unction to Pierre Renault. While his fellow-students were praying for him in the chapel, he was being anointed with the holy oil. At the time he was unconscious, and seemed about to breathe his last. It was even feared that he might do so before the end of the ceremony. Not so. A quarter of an hour afterwards the symptoms of approaching dissolution had disappeared, and the young man seemed to be on the road to rapid recovery. Free from suffering, he arose and ate, and the next day was able to perform his ordinary duties. Half of his infirmity, however, remained : he was still blind.

The best medical skill being again enlisted in his case, it was decided that he should enter the Versailles hospital and follow a drastic course of treatment, with the object of regaining something of his lost sight. This course was to begin on the 14th of the month.

The young man thought of his two hundred companions who were praying for him, and he united his prayers with theirs ; moreover, at his request, another appeal was made at the Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, for the suffrages of the Archconfraternity, in his behalf. He would have rejoiced in his cure being effected by supernatural means, if only that it might serve to strengthen the faith of others.

On the morning on which he was to leave for the hospital, he assisted at Mass in the community

chapel and communicated, the two hundred pupils of the establishment being present. The celebrant was the Superior of the Little Seminary. At the conclusion of the Holy Sacrifice, and before the priest had had time to unvest himself in the sacristy, he was informed by one of the attendants of the infirmary, that Pierre Renault had wished to return unaided from the altar rail to his seat. Immediately afterwards, a seminarist told him that the same Pierre Renault, on gaining his seat, had begun to read. While the priest was hurrying, in order to go and enquire into the truth of what he heard, he saw the blind youth of a few minutes before hastening towards him, and ready to throw himself into his arms. Claspings him, he said:—"What has happened, dear boy? Has sight been restored to you?"

"Yes," said the youngman. "While I was kneeling at the altar rail awaiting Holy Communion, a voice said to me:—'Dost thou believe?' I replied: 'Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou canst perform a miracle. Thou hast deprived me of my sight; Thou canst give it back to me.' As soon as the Sacred Host touched my tongue, I was as one dazed. I could see everything without seeing anything. As I remained there motionless, my companion slightly pushed me, as a sign to rise. Then I distinctly saw the altar step. On going back to my seat, I saw a bench, and went towards it, refusing all help. I then took up a book, the Imitation of Jesus

Christ, and after turning over a few pages, came upon the words, 'He who follows me does not walk in darkness, saith the Lord.' "

The cure was complete and lasting. A marble *ex voto* in the Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, and near the altar of the Archconfraternity, records it as follows:—"I was blind. There seemed to be no hope of my cure. I suddenly regained my sight on receiving Holy Communion, at the end of a novena, in honour of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Little Seminary of Versailles, April 14th, 1845. Pierre Renault. (Homage of gratitude to Mary on the twenty-fifth anniversary of my cure.)"

CHAPTER III.

By this time, M. Dés Genettes' remaining years on earth were to be but few. The good priest had laboured in sorrow, and was reaping in joy. A great joy yet remained to him. This was to witness the crowning, in the name of Pius IX., and of the Vatican chapter, of the statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires. The ceremony took place with great pomp in 1853.

The Rev. Père Corail, one of the preachers in connection with it, alluded on the occasion to our country as follows:—"England was in possession of a few sparks of the old faith of her fathers, when the Archconfraternity of Notre-Dame des Victoires began praying for her conversion. Almost at once some of the leading members of her aristocracy, of her clergy, and of her universities, left the pastures of error for the fold of the Church of Christ."

The two crowns, one for the statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires and the other for that of the Infant Saviour, had come from Rome, and represented in value 70,000 francs. They were studded with diamonds and emeralds.

The *éclat* of the ceremony was enhanced by the presence of prelates and princes of the Church.

The reader must not suppose that Catholic piety had allowed the statue of the revered Madonna of the Paris shrine and that of the Infant Saviour to remain until then without the ornament of crowns. For years previously the faithful had been accustomed to see each of these statues adorned with a richly-jewelled crown, the gift of the Marchioness Wellesley, wife of the Viceroy of Ireland. The crowns in question were aglow with pink and yellow topazes and amethysts.

Before the sands of M. Des Genettes' life are quite run out, we will glance at the personality of this holy man as a whole. In him the founder, the organizer, and the man of successful action left room until the last for the most exemplary performance of the duties of a parish priest. The keystone of his qualities as God's minister was his sympathy with the poor and suffering. He put into practice in his daily life the meaning of the Gospel words, "I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He was constantly urging his brethren of the priesthood to do the same and to go out with him in quest of the poor, weak, and ignorant. He was wont to say, "What may we not obtain from men, and for their own salvation, when we show them that kindness which is based on Divine charity. Let us then go to the poor, since they will not come to us; let our earnest care for them be a proof of the love of which

our hearts are full." In short, no priest of to-day, imbued with democratic instincts and moved by pity for the working classes, could put in practice in a more perfect manner the democratic spirit of the Gospel than did Abbé Des Genettes half a century ago.

As a preacher, the curé of Notre-Dame des Victoires was simple, direct, and singularly productive of result. Writing concerning him, M. de Riancey says :—"The rare gift granted to this man is not the eloquence of art, but the eloquence of the heart." Mgr. Lavigerie, afterwards the illustrious Cardinal of Africa, said on the same subject :—"His words are burning words coming from his own heart and going straight to the hearts of others ; they are words to be remembered to the end of life."

By a rare privilege, granted to his green old age, M. Des Genettes was able to work well almost to the last. On April 5th, 1860, he passed peacefully away at the ripe age of eighty-two.

By special permission of Napoleon III. he was interred in the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires and in the chapel of the Archconfraternity. Thus, at the foot of the altar where he had so often offered the Holy Sacrifice, and before the statue of her who in this world had been his almost visible protectress, and in presence of his weeping congregation, the body of the holy old man was laid to rest. Though the Church's liturgical voice put forth on the

occasion her most thrilling notes of supplication, most persons present felt that Heaven had already opened its gates to Abbé Des Genettes. At the time of the death of the founder, the names of the members of the Archconfraternity inscribed on the Paris register were 825,336, while affiliated confraternities amounted to 13,265.

Abbé Louis Chanel, a priest with excellent qualities of heart and mind, was appointed as M. Des Genettes' successor in the cure of Notre-Dame des Victoires. By this time the Archconfraternity was known from end to end of the two Americas and also in parts of Asia and Africa.

While the brilliant court of the Tuileries was radiating upon other European courts, there were men and women in France in high places who used to go and pray long and fervently at the favourite Paris shrine. Princess Clotilde Bonaparte was one of these. The Empress Eugénie was known to go there also when clouds of anxiety and anguish troubled the generally sunlit atmosphere of her life. The beautiful pendant lamp—the centre one of fourteen others—ever burning before the altar of Notre-Dame des Victoires, was her gift. In bitterness of spirit she went there to weep and to pray on the eve of leaving France as a fugitive in 1870. The lamp just alluded to was an *ex voto* on her part in gratitude for answered prayer in connection with Napoleon III. and the Italian campaign.

CHAPTER IV.



THE records of the church at this time, as well as the ever-increasing number of *ex voto* tablets and gifts on its walls, told that the beneficent work of conversions continued with unabated vigour during the last years of the Napoleonic rule.

We will pause before a large white marble slab which, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1864, made its way into the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, and took its present position in the chapel of the Archconfraternity to the right of the privileged altar. The first words on it are :—

THANKSGIVING OFFERING FROM THREE
ENGLISH CATHOLICS :

A. R.	J. A.	J. G.
4 May	1 June	2 July
	1864.	

The three English Catholics here designated, who will be easily recognisable to certain readers, had, as Anglicans, been long prayed for at the Paris

shrine. Underneath their initials runs the following inscription in French, which we translate :—

“Gratitude to Notre-Dame des Victoires, at whose feet, since the month of October, 1837, so many prayers have been offered for the conversion of England, at the request of the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer, a convert, since known as Father Ignatius Saint-Paul, of the Order of the Passionists, and who died October 1st, 1864.”

Then underneath we read :

“Immaculate Heart of Mary, treasure-house of mercy, finish your work. By your powerful intercession, hasten the conversion of our country.”

On another marble tablet (No. 2260) we read in French the following inscription :—“Converted by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, January 25th, 1863, the feast of the conversion of St. Paul and that of the Archconfraternity (of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), the members of which have offered so many prayers for my conversion, I give thanks to God and ask for repentance and mercy.”

The history concealed beneath these words is that of one who, by a sudden conversion, passed from recklessness to holiness, from the world to the cloister.

Mr. A. S., the gentleman in question, had in youth received a Christian education, but had been a practical unbeliever for more than twenty years. In 1863 we find him a man between thirty and forty years of age, addicted to science and learning

on the one hand, and on the other fond of the world and its pleasures. A single glimmer of his early religious life remained with him in this that he was never without the medal of the Immaculate Conception, known as the miraculous one, and that he from time to time repeated the words engraven upon it: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." There was something else telling in his favour also. It was that he had a sister a Carmelite nun, who was continually causing him to be prayed for at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

Towards the close of the year 1862 this Carmelite nun asked a Trappist monk, whom she knew, to call upon her brother. In the interview that followed between the Trappist and Mr. A. S., the latter, though polite, persistently waived the subject of religion. The visit made an impression upon him nevertheless, for from that time, as he afterwards admitted, he was subject to moments of depression and fear.

This brings us to the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, January, 1863. Respecting this feast of the Archconfraternity, together with that of the Conversion of St. Paul, which occurs near the same time, M. Des Genettes was in the habit of saying that he had never known either of them to pass without leaving on record some striking grace or graces in the way of conversion. The year with which we have now to do, the two feasts fell on the same day, Sunday, January 25th.

Mr. A. S., the prodigal who was about to say, "I will arise and go unto my father," had spent that day in his usual manner. It was evening, the office of the Archconfraternity at Notre-Dame des Victoires was over, and in the supplications that had just been arising in that temple of prayer for sinners, the sinner whose steps we are following had had his part. As the congregation were leaving the church, he, this sinner, was leaving a friend's house. On going out at the door he heard, as he thought, a voice saying to him: "Auguste, Auguste, God's mercy is waiting for thee!" At the same moment the thought of God's mercy presented itself to his mind. He seemed to see his sins weighing down the balance of Divine justice. He went home at once, fell on his knees, and resolved to change his life. M. Des Genettes, from the home of the blessed, looking down on the scene of his earthly labours, must have rejoiced at this fresh conquest of grace on the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Mr. A. S.'s conversion was effected, since the man of sin was turned to God ; but it was not yet complete. For a week the returning prodigal continued to struggle with Divine grace. On the evening of the following Sunday, happening to be near a church, he entered it. This church was the seat of an association in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in connection with the parent one at Notre-Dame des Victoires. The office of the

confraternity was going on. The Rosary was being recited for the conversion of sinners. As the custom was each decade was being offered for a special intention in connection with the conversion of sinners. As Mr. A. S. entered the director of the association said : " We are going to offer this decade for the sinner nearest his conversion whom the grace of God may have drawn to this church."

" I am that sinner," said Mr. A. S., falling on his knees. His conversion was now complete. A few days afterwards, he was seeking admittance in the Trappist monastery which sheltered the Trappist father who had called on him about two months before. He remained there a week, and during that time completed the work of his thorough reconciliation with God. He went back to Paris, but only to return six weeks later to the Trappist monastery, and remain there as a monk of La Trappe.

Eighteen years later, one morning in the spring of 1883, a religious with a long white beard, and in the garb of a Trappist, entered the sacristy of Notre-Dame des Victoires and asked to be allowed to celebrate Mass at the privileged altar. Afterwards he said to Abbé Victor Dumax, sub-director of the Archconfraternity : " It has been a source of joy to me to offer the Holy Sacrifice at this altar. But I knew the altar before. It was one of the last objects I looked on before withdrawing for ever from the world."

“Is it possible,” asked the priest to whom he spoke, “that you are the convert of January 25th, 1863?”

“I am he,” was the reply.

The history of the Archconfraternity with which we have to do is gemmed with conversions of this kind.

CHAPTER V.

WE come to the time when the Second Empire had just been brought to a close amid the shock of war, and when the shot of the Germans was booming over Paris. We are in 1870, and at the close of what is called the *année terrible*. While certain churches of the capital were converted into hospitals, that of Notre-Dame des Victoires remained open and intact, performing its duty as a house of prayer. There, while the Paris population were half starving without, faith and hope were kept alive, and incessant supplication went up to Heaven.

As soon as the Franco-German war was over, the horrors of the Commune began. The church of Notre-Dame des Victoires became as an oasis in the midst of flame and carnage. Hope was at first entertained that it would be as if visibly protected by Heaven from the fury of the *Fédérés*. But no. Paris' favoured shrine, like its Archbishop and some of its holiest priests, had to submit to one of the direst blasts of revolutionary fury that the

annals of nations shew. On May 17th, the vigil of the Feast of the Ascension, a battalion of the *Fédérés*, with the municipal authorities of the locality at their head, entered the church by force. A congregation was assembled there, and had just been listening to a sermon by M. Le Rebours, afterwards curé of the Madeleine.

In view of a possible invasion of this kind, measures of precaution had been taken. The first thought of the priests was for the Blessed Sacrament, which was quickly taken by a side door to the church of Saint-Roch. The priests that remained fell at once into the hands of the *Fédérés*, and included Abbé Victor Dumax and Abbé Laurent Amodru, at that time sub-director of the Archconfraternity. Then began a scene of rapine, lewdness, and sacrilege, to find a parallel for which we shall have to look back to the great Revolution. The resting-places of the dead of centuries were disturbed and the bodies torn up. The motive of the desecration was the quest of objects of value supposed to have been concealed in the vaults below. At last, in the vault where lay the remains of the musician Lulli, the spoilers came upon what they were looking for. Gold, silver, and gems were before them. There were altar vessels, and, among other things, the crowns given by the Marchioness Wellesley, those given by Pius IX., and two of more recent date. This opening of the tombs was effected during the night. The morning

light revealed in what had hitherto been a home of prayer, a very charnel house of bones and skulls. Ascension Day dawned, the work of destruction continued, *ex voto* tablets were pulled down, tabernacles were kicked and burst open, and, in short, every possible outrage was applied to sacred things. Ribald soldiers were to be seen in cope and chasuble, with missal in hand, parodying the Holy Sacrifice and interspersing the Mass service with passages of obscene songs. Outside, in front of the doorway, a sanctuary carpet had been spread, and on it were piled, in a huge heap, the human remains exhumed the night before. The bones were pointed to as those of the victims of priests and monks. Around the charnel heap, boys, in priests' vestments, yelled and danced.

A last attempt at desecration was reserved for the remains of M. Des Genettes, which were brought forth from their resting-place beneath the altar of Notre-Dame des Victoires. The head was quickly severed from the trunk, stuck on a pole, and paraded outside the church.

This was not the last effort to discredit religion in the eyes of the multitude. The relics of St. Aurelia, enclosed in a waxen body, the *corpo santo*, as when they had been given to the church by Gregory XVI., were taken from their shrine. At first sight, the body appeared to be that of a beautiful young girl asleep. The head was severed, stuck on a bayonet, and placed well in view in the choir, precautions

having been taken to prevent a too close inspection on the part of the throng. The long light hair of the *corpo santo*, and the surrounding semi-gloom, wonderfully helped the effort aimed at. Then the authors of this satanic piece of melodrama, inviting the people to draw near and pointing to the severed head with dishevelled hair, exclaimed: "This is the work of priests—the monsters whom you defend! In this young girl, whom they have strangled, you see their latest victim. Now, do you believe us?"

"I would not have believed it if I had not seen it," said a woman looking on, "but now that I have seen, I believe."

The day waned, and profligate women off the Paris streets flocked to the church to take part in the night orgies that were to follow. During the hours succeeding, debauchery, drunkenness, and profanity reigned in one of the most revered of Christian temples. This state of things continued until May 24th, when the regular troops from Versailles entered Paris. As soon as a detachment of these took up their quarters in the neighbourhood of Notre-Dame des Victoires, the band of ruffians within the church suddenly disappeared.

The building thus escaped destruction, and the red flag of the Commune was quickly snatched from its summit. During the days that followed it was closed, pending the liturgical ceremonies of purifi-

cation, usual under such circumstances. These took place on June 3rd. It was then re-opened to public worship. Its curé, M. Chanel, had received so severe a shock from recent events that he asked to be relieved of his functions, and died a few months afterwards.

The next curé of Notre-Dame des Victoires was M. Louis Chevojon, who set to work at once at restoring and re-embellishing the church. All the *ex voto* offerings that had escaped destruction, and the greater number had done so, resumed their places on the walls, and the inside of the church soon began to wear its former aspect. The relics of the virgin martyr Aurelia were gathered together and placed in their reliquary beneath the altar of the Archconfraternity. The remains of M. Des Genettes were also put together, and placed in their vault, but not until they had been wept over and kissed by one who had known and served under the holy founder. This was Abbé Victor Dumax. After the church had been abandoned by the *Fédérés*, a heap of bones covered by a red rag had been pointed to as those of M. Des Genettes, and it was then that Abbé Dumax had knelt down and reverently brought his lips in contact with them.

At that time the statues of Notre-Dame des Victoires and of the Infant Saviour were crownless, the rich crowns given by Pius IX., and others with them, having been carried off as booty by the *Fédérés*. It was reserved for Frenchwomen, high

and low, rich and poor, to supply by their generous contributions what was wanting in this respect. They did so, ladies giving their jewels, and poor women their mites. The result was the magnificent jewelled crowns to be seen on the statues at the present day.

With order thus restored, we see the devotion, of which the church of Notre Dame des Victoires is the centre, entering upon a fresh chapter of its history. The aspect of things in general has changed, and this change will become more marked before the last quarter of a century has drawn to a close. Infidelity and irreligion in France are to gain in proportion and run into more distinct lines; while on the other hand, religion and a need of religious belief are to put forth certain promising signs among the people. Already the church of the National Vow is rising on the summit of Montmartre, and already the pilgrimage movement is agitating in a religious sense the whole country. But a fresh impetus to other centres of devotion is not for a moment to eclipse the light from our Paris shrine. On the contrary, by inspiration or assimilation, the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires is to make all other forms of devotion its own.

While the church was not only recovering from its profanation under the Commune, but gaining in beauty of decoration under the skilful management of its head pastor, fresh *ex voto* offerings in

marble and gold were continually taking their places on its walls.

We will here cite an instance of answered prayer in connection with this period. The case is that of two young men united in friendship, who in early youth had received a Christian education together. At the respective ages of nineteen and twenty they separated, the younger one, Chorel by name, to go to Spain, and the other, whom we will call X., to become a Paris journalist imbued with Socialistic theories. Having lost sight of each other for years, they met in Paris by accident on the Place St. Eustache, towards the close of the year 1874. Chorel had returned from Spain in the last stage of destitution, and having long given up all religious practice. The two were at that time a little over thirty years of age. It was easy for the one, then a successful journalist, to obtain on the newspaper for which he wrote some subordinate employment for his destitute friend. This was quickly done, and Chorel, in order to be sure of having bread to eat, consented to become an active propagator of anti-Christian and Socialistic ideas.

By a side light we will look at what seems to be an inconsistency on the part of the younger man. This was that, in the midst of his reverses, wanderings and aberrations, he had not ceased to wear the medal of the Immaculate Conception, called the miraculous one, which in his case had been blessed by the curé of Ars. Besides this, now that

he was in Paris, he sometimes, though without the knowledge of friends or acquaintances, stole into the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires and remained there a considerable time.

This went on for about three years, but before the end of that time Chorel's health had given way and pulmonary consumption had set in. At the close of 1877 he entered the hospital of the Hôtel-Dieu, and remained there eight months, gradually getting worse. In the ward in which he was, and in a bed close to his own, there was another consumptive patient. One day he heard the doctor in attendance say in reference to them both: "Those two will not be here long, but probably No. 17 will go first." Chorel, who was the No. 17 designated, took these words as his death warrant.

This was in July. About the same time a notice concerning the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes, which was being organised for the following month, came into his hands. The Superior of the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu urged him to take part in it. His reply was that he was too poor to do so. The nun persisting and telling him that he might have a ticket free of charge, he at last consented to put in a request to that effect. At this juncture the consumptive patient whose bed was near his own died suddenly. Chorel, looking upon his own end as imminent, and moved by one of those impulses peculiar to the hopelessly ill and dying, insisted on leaving the hospital at once. He left it in spite of

the remonstrances of nurses and doctors. One doctor even said : " Does he mean to go and die in the street, and at the very doors of the Hôtel-Dieu ? "

How or where the sufferer spent the following three weeks is not clear ; but it is certain that each day, or nearly so, he found means to get to the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Writing afterwards he says : " What went on within me while I was at the church it would be difficult for me to say. " He seems, however, at this time to have thought little about the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. When, one day, an attendant of the Hôtel-Dieu brought him the pilgrim's ticket he had consented to apply for three weeks before, he was undecided whether to avail himself of it or not. Such reflections as these passed through his mind : " Is it prudent for me to go in my state ? Is all they say of Lourdes true ? In any case, by far the greater number of the sick who are about to go there will come back uncured. "

Thus the devil argued for him ; but there was another impulse urging him to act, and it triumphed. He at last decided to join the pilgrimage, and moreover to prepare for the act by worthily approaching the sacraments. Knowing his state of extreme bodily weakness when the hospital attendant brought him the ticket, and who happened to call on him on the Feast of the Assumption, he asked the latter to accompany him

the next day to the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Both were at the church the following morning at seven o'clock. Chorel, kneeling at the tribunal of penance, received absolution for his sins. During the Mass that followed at the altar of the Archconfraternity he was moved to the soul at the thought of his friend X., to whom he was sincerely attached, and who was so far removed from all religious influence. When at the altar rails about to communicate he looked up at the statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires and made in his heart a promise. It was to the following effect: "Obtain for me my restoration to health and the conversion of my friend, and I promise to do penance in a cloister the rest of my life."

After the communion he was led back to his seat in an almost fainting state. A cold sweat broke out over him. Then followed a great sense of interior peace. "I felt," he says, "that something extraordinary was taking place within me. It was as if my chest were being interiorly healed." In fact, the blood-spitting that had so weakened him for months past completely ceased from that hour. This was but the beginning of the cure; the rest was to follow four days later at Lourdes.

On seeing him leave Paris the following day, Saturday, August 17th, with the members of the National Pilgrimage, his friend X. taxed him with imprudence, and said that he feared to see him brought home between four boards. He added,

however, with a smile of incredulity, though softening his voice the while : " If you come back cured, I too will go to confession."

" I make a note of your promise," said Chorel.

Sunday was spent by the pilgrims at Poitiers. On Monday, the first day at Lourdes, Chorel was one of the five or six reputed to be miraculously cured. When he returned to Paris the following Saturday with the other pilgrims he was hardly recognisable by his friend X. The latter, amazed and at first incredulous, had, however, to submit to evidence.

The two went together to the Hôtel-Dieu, where doctors and nurses had so lately seen Chorel in an all but dying state. He who had been in the last stage of pulmonary consumption now stood before them with sound lungs and in perfect health. The resuscitated man whispered to his friend : " I do not forget your promise." The other replied by a pressure of the hand. Before the two parted Chorel intimated that he should be at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires early the following morning. When at an early hour on the morrow he heard X. tapping at his room door, he concluded that the visit was with the object of turning him from his church-going purpose and taking him somewhere to breakfast. He hinted as much. The other made no reply. The two set forth together, X. persistently accompanying his friend through short cuts to the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

When they were in front of it, he pointed to the open doors and said: "You are going in there, are you not? So am I."

Great was Chorel's astonishment on seeing his friend enter the church, and greater still on seeing him take his place before the privileged altar where the Holy Sacrifice was about to begin; and immeasurably greater still when, at the moment of the Communion, he saw him go and kneel at the altar-rails. The two performed the great act together. At that moment the younger of the two understood that his twofold prayer had been answered. Only a few days before he, a consumptive patient, hardly able to stand, had prayed at that altar for his restoration to health and his friend's conversion. He was now in perfect health; and the friend beside him, the journalist who with his pen had been in the habit of soiling holy things, was now a convert and a penitent.

A week later the journalist had thrown up his position and retired into a monastery. His friend Chorel took a similar step a little more than a month later—in this but keeping the promise he had made at the altar of Notre-Dame des Victoires in the case of his double request being granted. Abbé Victor Dumax, long sub-Director of the Archconfraternity, was the recipient of his last communications before withdrawing from the world for ever. And it is this same Abbé Dumax who, in a publication entitled *Un Triple Prodige*, gives us a detailed

account of the threefold miracle we have been describing. Chorel's cure at Lourdes is also recorded in the Annals of the Archconfraternity of December 8th, 1878, and in the *Pèlerin* of Sept. 7th of the same year.

The young man thus signally blessed left behind him at Notre-Dame des Victoires an *ex voto* numbered 14,453. It was in the form of a metal heart, gilt, and contained the following inscription :—

“My good Mother, you have completed your work ; you have obtained my cure and my friend's conversion. It is now for me to keep my promise, and go and serve God in solitude. Bless me at the moment of my departure, and watch over me to the end.”

CHAPTER VI.

ACCORDING to statistics, there were in 1880 as many as 17,833 associations in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, aggregated to the great centre one of Paris, and, as nearly as could be computed, the members of these different confraternities amounted to upwards of twenty-five million persons.

A backward glance from the beginning of the twentieth century, over the preceding twenty years, shows the record of conversions and other graces in connection with the great Paris shrine, to have been on an increasing scale rather than otherwise.

The history of the shrine during this period has been principally writing itself in marble and gold on the walls around in the shape of *ex votos*, and in the Annals of the Archconfraternity, founded by M. Des Genettes half a century ago. The historian of the future, taking up this part of our subject, will find matter for a splendid page relative to God's dealings with souls, in connection with the Paris church we are considering. It is our humble task but to single out here and there one of these responses on

Heaven's part, and to weave it as a gem into the woof of our narrative.

We will, for a few moments, dwell on a conversion that took place in 1892. It was that of an English Protestant, who had come with her family to live in France nine years before. She alone was a Protestant, her husband having in quite early life joined the Catholic Church, and having as a consequence brought up his two children in his adopted faith. The poor mother had struggled hard against this bringing up of her children in a faith other than her own; she had, moreover, from the first been systematically and bitterly opposed to the Catholic religion.

At the beginning of the year 1889, her husband lay hopelessly ill at Sèvres, near Paris. He had recently become a member of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners, and the Blessed Virgin as Notre-Dame des Victoires was continually being invoked in his behalf. No one supposed that his end would be other than that of the just; at the same time, no one was prepared to see in his case, as the very radiance of Heaven wrapping round a death-bed. Amid what, to human eyes, seemed the horrors of a long and terrible agony, all was light and peace within. In answer to questions put to him, as to what he felt, his answers were:—"Happy—perfectly happy." "I'm happy in this world, and I hope to be eternally blessed."

“Blessed Lord! blessed Jesus!” came from his lips; and, “Beautiful!—heavenly!” as if he saw what those around could not see. As long as speech lasted it was employed in blessing God. His end exemplified the truth of the following words by the Rev. Frederic Faber, of the Oratory, in reference to a Christian’s death-bed:—“For the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are so nearly fretted through, that the loud alleluias surprise and distract the contrite love of him whose eyes are closing on the Crucifix.”*

As the day waned the dying Christian summoned his remaining strength for a supreme farewell. The members of his family were around him. He blessed them. To the poor Protestant wife, among other things he said: “We shall soon meet in Heaven.”

One who had been instrumental in bringing this death-bed within the influence of the Paris shrine of Notre-Dame des Victoires was, with others, inclined to see in this exceptional ending of a good man’s life something like a direct answer from Heaven. This view led to another one, which was that the halo of blessedness surrounding the death-bed we have just been describing might have been Heaven’s way of speaking to the Protestant wife. It seemed to say to her: “See how a Catholic can die!”

Something of the divine significance underlying this interpretation seemed to have made its way

* *The Creator and the Creature.*—FABER.

into the mind of the lonely Protestant in a foreign country, whose only prop was now in her two Catholic children. Yet outwardly this Protestant seemed as far removed from Catholicism as ever. No arguments or efforts at persuasion were used in her case, such having completely failed in the past. But that weapon was employed which, as St. Augustin says, constitutes man's strength and God's weakness—she was prayed for. She was continually having part in the prayers at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, as she had been having them for the previous six years. She had even been inscribed as a passive member on the register of the Archconfraternity.

Meanwhile, she who was the object of this crusade of prayer was, by her resignation, forgetfulness of self, and courage in the face of daily crosses, hourly endearing herself to those around her. Nevertheless, looking on with merely human eyes, and taking into consideration character, temperament, and life-long prejudice, her conversion to Catholicism seemed an impossibility.

Two years and a half had passed since the death-bed scene at Sèvres. It was the Feast of the Assumption. No change had taken place. "Mother, you ought to wear a medal of Notre-Dame des Victoires. Will you do so?"

The words were said at a venture, and as if no importance was attached to them. The answer was a hand held out to receive. A little medal at once

left the daughter's neck and took its place on the mother's.

This mute quiescent answer was a triumph. It was purposely not followed up. Nothing further of a personal character in the matter of religion took place until five months and a half later, when, struck by a mortal illness, she who was the object of so much solicitude, was sitting up for the last time. Her daughter kneeling beside her painfully and hesitatingly said : "Mother, if you were to get worse, would you like to see a Protestant clergyman?" The question was put to feel the ground. The answer was : "I would rather see one of your Passionists." The Passionists referred to were those of St. Joseph's Church, Avenue Hoche. Heaven's answer had come, and a much-wrestled-for human soul, with its strong will turned heavenward, was about to be gathered as a Catholic into the fold of Christ.

On the same occasion this mother, calm, strong with moral strength, and with a countenance spiritualised and beautiful, said : "I am much changed ; I do not fear death now." By this time her son and daughter were beside her, the two the bringing up of whom in the Catholic faith had constituted the great sorrow of her married life. It was a Sunday, and the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners, the day which M. Des Genettes had never known pass without being marked by one or more signal

graces in the way of conversion. Four days later the sufferer was in bed, from which she was never more to rise. A Passionist Father, the Rev. Mathew Kelly, of St. Joseph's Church, Avenue Hoche, was by her side. Her confession had been made. Then, her son holding her head, and her daughter, standing at her feet, the water of conditional baptism was poured over her forehead. Calmly she made her profession of faith, simplifying it at the end by saying, "I believe all that I ought to believe." The Sacred Host was then brought to her lips. Her first and last communion made, her poor wasted limbs were anointed with the unction of the dying.

But death did not come yet : an agony of seventeen days had to follow. There was no looking back ; no murmur or regret. She who lay there waiting for the end knew that her dying husband's words—"We shall soon meet in heaven"—were about to be realised. What added to the grandeur and pathos of this death-bed, was moral energy to an extraordinary degree, animating a decaying bodily frame. As beautiful and pathetic as her courage and trust was this convert's maternal instinct, asserting itself pure and unselfish in the presence of death. There was a wealth of unutterable tenderness condensed in the single words, "My child," as these came from her dying lips. "I care not for myself," she said to her daughter, "if only you keep up."

Shortly before the end she was heard to say :
“The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.”

A few minutes before her spirit fled her lips made an effort to kiss the crucifix presented to her. She, like her husband, died a member of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners.

In relating this case of conversion we have purposely dwelt on details, unimportant in themselves, believing as we do that such details in such cases often serve as side-lights to those who know how to read the language of Heaven in human things.

CHAPTER VII.

LOOKED at in the immediate present, the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, as a home of prayer, is second to none ; while it is still, as heretofore, a converging point for numerous religious undertakings. Each year it serves as the site for the closing scene of the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. There a number of the members of the Pilgrimage meet and give thanks to Heaven on their return from the banks of the Gave.

The crusade of prayer for England, set in action by M. Des Genettes in 1838, and uninterrupted ever since, has recently received a fresh impetus by the establishment at Saint Sulpice of the Arch-confraternity of Our Lady of Compassion, and by the Pope's appeal to French Catholics to assist by their suffrages in the work of converting Great Britain. In accordance with this action on the part of the Holy See and by command of the Archbishop of Paris, a Mass for the conversion of England is celebrated on the first Saturday of every month at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires.

On April 24th, 1898, just sixty years from its

canonical erection by Gregory XVI., the Archconfraternity celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. On this occasion, priests, prelates, and renowned religious brought their gifts in the shape of eloquence and knowledge of facts. The celebration took the form of a solemn *triduum*. For three days the church was full; for three days preaching did not cease.

The Rev. Aloys Pottier, S.J., one of the preachers, applying to his subject the words : *Posuit me sicut sagittam electam in pharetra sua, abscondit me, et dixit mihi: in te gloriabor*, proceeded to show the Blessed Virgin as the arrow of choice reserved by God for these later times in order to combat the evils arrayed under the head of materialism. To present-day materialism the orator especially opposed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Having traced in a few leading lines the history of the great devotion of which the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires in this age has been the centre, we will now glance at the building itself.

The exterior of this building, Ionic in style, is architecturally unattractive, while reflecting the classic taste of the period which saw it rise. The interior is in the form of a Latin cross, with simplicity and severity in its lines, without aisles, but having lateral chapels, and an exceptional length of choir. A subdued richness of ornamentation prevails throughout.

But the visitor on entering is not struck by

architectural or artistic details. It is a devotional sentiment that takes possession of him, a religious atmosphere that wraps him round; it is the language of answered prayer that everywhere and convincingly speaks to his heart and mind. This language is written on the marble tablets which cover the walls and pillars around, from floor to roof; it is written on hearts of gold and jewelled gifts that line the building in places as with gold and gemmed embroidery.

In the pervading semi-gloom, which semi-gloom may, when occasion demands, be illumined by as many as nine hundred gas jets, there is one effulgent spot; it is the east transept, with its altar of Notre-Dame des Victoires; it is the chapel of the Archconfraternity. It is there that the faithful gather; it is there that prayer never ceases during the day. The chapel is ever ablaze with lights, lamps ever burn before the altar, the Virgin-Mother in marble, with a face of serene beauty, looks down.

This statue, the origin of which is unknown, and which, in the course of the last sixty years, has had time to become famous, is exquisite as to expression, grace of form and attitude. Critics, however, will not allow it to be a perfect work of art. Be this as it may, it conveys the impression of sweet and superhuman motherhood, surrounded by an aureole, and bending in pity to the wants of earth.

As has been said in these pages, there is a rich

crown on the statue of Notre-Dame des Victoires, and one on that of the Infant Saviour, but the shrine's choicest crown, a living one, is the watchers and worshippers ever before it. There may be seen the brilliant woman of the world, on whose fingers jewels gleam, and whose carriage is waiting for her outside, kneeling beside a poor woman of the people, glad for a few moments to lay down her basket, and bow her head, and fold her toil-worn hands in prayer. The ever-varying human picture shews us priests and nuns taking their places in the throng before the altar; and fresh young faces looking up and telling their wants to heaven; and old and withered ones, speaking the same language. And the picture shows us also *men*. Yes, the shrine of Notre-Dame des Victoires shows us *men*—laymen, Frenchmen, Parisians, men of society, and men of the people—who are not ashamed to bow the knee and kneel in prayer at the world-famous altar. There the aristocrat and the artisan meet.

Cardinal Vaughan, passing through Paris in 1895, spent some time at the Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, and left at the shrine a jewelled gift.

It is the language of gratitude that speaks from the marble tablets and gifts in gold on the walls of this church. From the many thousand inscriptions visible, we will cull a few. A tablet, numbered 7220, says in English, "I thank thee, O Mary, for having preserved my wife's life. Madras, India, V.E.L." Another, 2638, also in English, and not

far from the one just mentioned, says :—"I invoked the Blessed Virgin. She heard my prayer and my health was restored. I acknowledge this favour with heart-felt gratitude. August 1860. C.O.S."

Though on these walls there is a sprinkling of words from the principal European languages, most of the inscriptions are, of course, in French. Of these, one numbered 3680, says :—"Brought dying to the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, August 4th, 1866, I was suddenly cured on receiving Holy Communion.—LÉONTINE TUYER." Another, 2795, says :—"A convert from Protestantism and called to the priesthood, I have, thanks to you, O Mary, had the happiness of baptising my mother."

There is a stained-glass window which adds its note to the silent voice of praise ascending from the temple. It is in the apse above the high altar, and represents the scene of Calvary, with the Mother of Sorrows on one side and St. John on the other. Beside the beloved disciple, a young woman is kneeling with eyes fixed on the Blessed Virgin. She wears a mantle lined with ermine and a ducal coronet is at her feet. The Mother of Sorrows is looking at her and pointing to the cross. An angel is above and is in the act of bearing away a little child. The figure kneeling and clad in ermine represents Yolande, Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld (Duchesse de Bisaccia).

To understand this subject on painted glass, we must look back to 1854. In the winter of that year

this lady's husband fell dangerously ill. He was nursed by his young wife, on whom nature seemed to have showered her choicest gifts. The union of the couple had been blessed shortly before by the birth of a son. M. Des Genettes having known the two from infancy, it was not surprising that the Countess Yolande in her great trouble should have had recourse to him. She told him that she was about to begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin, as Notre-Dame des Victoires, for her husband's recovery, and requested him to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on nine consecutive days for the same object.

Six days passed. On the seventh the Countess again sought M. Des Genettes. On seeing him her first words were :—" My grief is greater than ever. He gets worse. The idea has entered my mind that Heaven requires a sacrifice of me, so I have decided to ask God to take my life, and, in return, to spare that of my husband."

M. Des Genettes tried in vain to turn her from her purpose. Two days afterwards, joy appeared to be reigning in the Paris mansion occupied by this branch of the de la Rochefoucauld family.

The truth was that on the last day of the novena, the sick man had been suddenly restored to health. The joy was, however, short lived. A few days afterwards the child that had been lately born to this happy pair fell suddenly ill. The mother tended it as she had tended her husband. It died in her

arms. She continued to clasp it to her breast, kissing it when dead. It was this contact that communicated to her the germs of the malady of which the child had died and of which she was to die a few days afterwards.

It is possible that the voice of praise in marble and gold, though silent, ever speaking in this temple, does but represent the one grateful leper of the Gospel, and that the nine other lepers are to be sought for in the innumerable Christians throughout the world who have received benefits in connection with this shrine, but who have testified their gratitude by no material sign.

An idea of the spiritual activity of which this church is the centre may be gathered from the fact that on an average about a thousand letters a month are received there, from all parts of the world, relative to the obtaining and to the requesting of spiritual favours through the prayers of the Archconfraternity. Another fact speaks with equal eloquence : it is that on ordinary days as many as a thousand tapers given by the faithful burn at the privileged altar or in connection with it, and that on exceptional days the number of these votive lights increases to upwards of three thousand. On the portal of this unobtrusive but important Paris church might be inscribed in large letters the words : "Ask and ye shall receive."

PART III.



La Salette.

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CHAPTER I.

IN considering the great work of M. Des Genettes' life we have seen devotion to Notre-Dame des Victoires bursting forth and permeating religious action throughout a country. The next sign of a great religious awakening in France comes to us with rumours of a celestial Apparition on the mountain of La Salette. Accounts of what the cowherd children saw and of what they heard on the Alpine summit by Mount Gargas, September 19th, 1846, quickly sped throughout France and far beyond. Though more than fifty years have passed since then, the girl Mélanie and the boy Maximin are still before us as distinctly as when first they came into public notice.

The scene has been described again and again, and yet it retains all its pristine freshness. We have before us the Alpine *planeau* of *Sous-les-Baisses* at

an altitude of 6,000 feet above the sea level ; Mount Gargas rises beside it more than 1,200 feet higher ; and higher still in another direction towers the ever snow-capped mountain of the Obiou.

Before reaching this verdant spot a world of naked rocky grandeur has to be passed. But the spot itself is a very oasis, and the green carpet that covers it clothes also the sides of its immediately surrounding hills. The mountain violet and the Alpine forget-me-not and other flowers grow there in such profusion that, in some places, they give a prevailing blue tint to whole sweeps of sward. The mountain lines converging towards this spot assume exquisite beauty and softness.

On the afternoon with which we have to do, that of September 19th, 1846, mellow sunlight bathed the scene. It was a Saturday, the last of the Ember days, and the vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. The hour was about three o'clock in the afternoon. The church was at the time, according to the Roman ritual, chanting the vespers of the feast of the morrow. The *Stabat Mater* was entering into her chants.

Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat were in the ravine of the Sezia, at the base of Mount Gargas. They had just risen from the grass, where they had been sleeping after their frugal mid-day meal of rye bread dipped in water.

These two had met for the first time three days before ; they had played together in these parts the

day before; they had come there together that morning tending their masters' cows. It was the thought of the cows that had caused Mélanie to suddenly spring to her feet on awaking. The animals were not to be seen. She called Maximin, who awoke with a start, and then sprang to his feet also.

After crossing the ravine and ascending a gentle acclivity, they caught sight of their cattle on the flank of Mount Gargas. They then went back towards the spot they had left.

More than one mountain torrent flowed into the Sezia. One of these was known as the *Fontaine des bêtes*, and another as the *Fontaine des hommes*. It was into the water of this stream that the boy and girl had dipped their bread before eating it at mid-day.

Close by was the dried-up bed of another stream, the *Petite Fontaine*, which flowed at certain seasons only. At the exact time of which we write, at a spot in its midst, there were some stones piled one upon another. These had been placed there just before by the boy and girl, playing at making what they called a *Paradis*, which was a sort of miniature altar covered with wild flowers. It was near this spot that the two had slept during the early part of the afternoon. The *panetières* that had contained their bread were still on the ground there.

On drawing near, Mélanie stopped short; then calling to Maximin, who was a little behind her,

told him to come quickly and see a bright light. The boy was beside her in a moment. "Where is it?" he asked. She pointed in the direction of the *Petite Fontaine*.

According to the description of these little cow-herds, what they at first saw was as a globe of light of a brightness far exceeding that of the sun, though of a different kind. As they looked, the luminous globe seemed to open. They then saw within the radiance the majestic figure of a woman in forward-drooping attitude and sitting on the stones of their *paradis* in the dried-up stream. Her elbows were on her knees and her face was hidden by her hands.

A feeling of awe came over Mélanie, and she let fall her stick.

"Pick it up," said the boy. "If she does us any harm I will give her a good blow." With this he brandished his own stick.

They then saw the sitting, drooping, figure rise to her full height and fold her arms, and they heard a gentle voice, as if close by, say: "Come nearer, children, and do not be afraid; I have something of importance to tell you."

They drew near, and the figure advanced towards them, stopping at the spot where they had shortly before been sleeping. They say that her feet did not touch the ground by a distance of about twenty centimètres. They were close to the majestic figure, but in front of it, and looking up at it, one

on each side. They then listened to the following words :—

“If my people will not submit, I shall be obliged to let go my Son’s arm. I can no longer hold it up. How long have I not been suffering for you? In order that my Son forsake you not, I am obliged to pray to Him without ceasing. And you all pay no attention to this.

“No matter how much you may pray, or what you may do, you will never be able to make me a return for what I have done for you. I have given six days wherein to labour, and the seventh day I have reserved for myself, and that (seventh day) you will not give me. It is that which makes my Son’s arm heavy. And those who drive carts can no longer swear without using my Son’s name. It is these two things that so weigh down His arm.

“If the crops fail it will be through your own fault. I gave you a proof of this last year in the potatoes, and you paid no attention to it. On the contrary, when you found bad ones, you swore and made use in your oaths of my Son’s name. They will go on rotting until Christmas, and then there will be none.”

Mélanie, not understanding the meaning of the word potato in French, and the Apparition knowing what was passing in her mind, said :—“As you do not understand French, my children, I will speak to you in another way.” She began speaking in *patois*, the dialect of the country, and repeated what

she had just said concerning the potatoes :—"They will go on rotting until Christmas, and then there will be none."

"Oh no, *Madame*, that cannot be !" said the boy.

"Yes, my child, you will see that it will be," was the reply. The sublime admonitress continued :—"Let him who has wheat sow it not. The birds will eat what is sown, and should a few blades spring up, the grain from them will become dust in the threshing. There will be a great famine ; but before that, children under seven will be seized by trembling and die in the arms of those who hold them, and grown-up people will do penance by hunger. The grapes will rot, and the walnuts will turn bad."

She, who thus spake, here said something in secret to each of the children. As she spoke to each in turn in what seemed to be her previous tone of voice, the other could see her lips move, but could not hear what she said. Hence the famous secret or secrets of La Salette.

After this interruption, the message of prophecy continued :—"If they become converted, the stones and rocks will be changed into heaps of corn, and the land will be sown with potatoes." "Do you say your prayers, my children?" asked the voice that had just been foreshadowing possible woes and benedictions for France. The tones of this voice struck the listeners by their enchanting sweetness. "Oh no, *Madame*, not very often," was the reply.

“Oh, my children, you must say them night and morning,” were the words the boy and girl listened to. “When you have not much time, say only the ‘Our Father,’ and the ‘Hail Mary’; and when you have more time say more. Only a few elderly women go to Mass. The rest work on Sundays all the summer, and when the winter comes, the boys, not knowing what to do, go to Mass, only to turn religion into ridicule. During Lent, they go to the shambles like dogs. My children, have you never seen wheat that is diseased?” “No, *Madame*, we have never seen any,” was the reply. “Yes, my child, you have.” These last words were addressed to Maximin. “It was when you were near Coin with your father, and when the man to whom the ground belonged, said:—‘Come and see how my wheat is spoiling.’ You both went, and your father took two or three ears of wheat and rubbed them together in his hands, and they went to dust. On your way back, when you were only a few hours’ walk from Corps, your father gave you a piece of bread and said:—‘Take and eat, my child; eat this year, for there is no knowing who will eat next year, if the wheat disease continues like this.’”

Maximin replied:—“What you say is quite true, *Madame*; I had forgotten it.”

“Now, my children, you will make this known to all my people.” These words were spoken in French instead of in *patois*. The

message was delivered ; the figure was about to vanish.

Before following it with the mind, as Mélanie and Maximin did with their eyes, to the spot whence it ascended, we will borrow a few words from the after accounts of the two witnesses, and thus endeavour to present something of the celestial picture that met the children's gaze. The two tell us that as they stood and listened they could, notwithstanding its exceeding brightness, look without flinching on the light that enveloped the Apparition.

According to Mélanie's description, the face of her for whom she could find no other name than that of the Beautiful Lady (*la belle dame*) was pale rather than otherwise, and oval. "She shed tears all the time she was speaking," said the girl. She describes the costume as white, with glittering points of light upon it, with gold-coloured drapery in front, which she calls an apron, and with a white kerchief or *fichu* covering the shoulders. This kerchief or *fichu* was bordered with coloured roses, and there were multi-coloured roses about the feet. On the head was a crown of gold, and on the breast a crucifix hanging from a chain of gold round the neck, and shewing upon it the implements of the Passion.

The boy does not seemed to have noticed these details of costume as minutely as did Mélanie, nor did he see the tears fall. Alluding to this subject twenty years later in a publication entitled *Ma*

profession de foi, he says:—"How could ignorant children as we were be expected to find fitting words for the description of things so extraordinary? Probably what we described as crown, *coif*, chain, *fichu*, and apron, hardly had the form of such. There was nothing of earth in the costume we looked upon. Seen in the blaze of multi-coloured rays that met, it presented a magnificent *ensemble* which we in describing have diminished and materialized."

Interesting queries have been put forth concerning the symbolical meaning of the costume of the Apparition of La Salette. Was the so-called *fichu* meant to represent the *amice* worn by the priest at the altar? has been asked. And, was the gold-coloured drapery in front, described as an apron, part of a long scapular or a dalmatic? is a question that has been discussed by more than one theological writer.

Mélanie and Maximin persisted in maintaining that the texture of the dress of the Beautiful Lady could be compared to nothing earthly, any more than could be the colour and brightness of the rays of light that surrounded her.

We return to the boy and girl in the ravine of the Sezia, looking up at their celestial visitant and listening to her last words:—"You will make this known to all my people."

They tell us that after this the figure moved forward, seeming to glide over the surface of the grass but without causing a blade to bend.

Their first impression of surprise over, they ran after it, came up with it, and took their places near it, one standing a little in the foreground and the other a little behind.

Then, before them, the Beautiful Lady, as they say, rose gradually into the air, remaining as suspended for some minutes at a distance of about two metres from the earth. After this, the figure continued to rise, the head first becoming lost to view in the blaze or globe of light that surrounded it, and then the body, and lastly, the feet. The two, who tried to follow it with their eyes, could only see the globe of light ascending, until that, too, became lost to view.

The two witnesses of the phenomenon, as one of them tells us long afterwards in writing, continued to look upwards and then around, and remained for some time speechless. When they came to themselves, Mélanie was the first to speak. "It must be the good God," she said, "or the Blessed Virgin or some great saint."

"If I had known that," said Maximin, "I would have asked her to take me with her."

The sun was sinking in the azure sky on that glorious, cloudless September afternoon. At the usual evening hour the two little cow-herds drove their cattle home, taking the way to the neighbouring village of the Abladins, one of a cluster of hamlets on the mountain side. Maximin was temporarily in the employ of a man there named

Jules Selme. Mélanie had since the previous spring been in the service of a man named Baptiste Pra, also of the Abladins.

Before going home to his own master, Maximin dropped in on the family of Mélanie's employer and began giving his account of what had taken place.

In the meantime Mélanie remained loitering in the stable, as she was in the habit of doing. Called upon to give her version of the story, she replied : "Maximin has already told you." Being forced to speak, her account exactly corresponded with the boy's.

While some believed, and others did not, the account of the Apparition on the mountain quickly sped through the adjoining villages. Abbé Jacques Mélin, curé of La Salette, alluded indirectly to the subject in his sermon at High Mass the following morning, the day being Sunday. In the meantime the curé had seen Mélanie and Maximin, had listened to their account, and, though a man of extreme prudence, had told them, with tears in his eyes, that they had seen the Blessed Virgin.

A striking feature in the affair was the perfect uniformity of the children's accounts and the marked change that had come over the two. On leaving for Mount Gargas on the morning of the Apparition they knew nothing of French, if we except the fact that Maximin was acquainted with a few words of that language. On going home on the evening of the same day, they were able to

relate in fluent French what had happened. Moreover, the intelligence of both had become suddenly illumined and enlarged, but only as to what concerned the Apparition. On this subject they could already speak with something like theological lucidity and precision. On all other subjects they remained ignorant as before. And this contrast was to continue. For years they were to present the singular spectacle of human insufficiency in relation to the ordinary affairs of life, and subtlety of intelligence, and remarkable readiness of reply, in defending their account of the Apparition.

Their natural slowness of apprehension was such that Mélanie, put to school almost at once with the *Sœurs de la Providence* of the neighbouring town of Corps, was not able, until two years later, at the age of seventeen, to make her first communion ; while as to Maximin, likewise under good tuition, four years had to elapse before he succeeded in learning the Lord's Prayer, or was able to serve at Mass. The day following the Apparition, Maximin went back to his father at Corps. Thus he and Mélanie were separated from each other, and were to remain so.

As the rumour of what had taken place on Mount Gargas got noised abroad, many people went to the spot—some going to see, and some to pray. At first the ecclesiastical authorities looked on, neither condemning nor openly approving this new devotional movement. In fact, the Bishop of

Grenoble had at once given the clergy of his diocese to understand that he wished them to observe a strictly neutral attitude.

Before going further, it is well to notice a feature of interest in connection with a site soon to be regarded as holy by large bodies of Catholics throughout the world. The bed of the *Petite Fontaine*, where the Apparition was first seen, was dry, as has been said, and from time immemorial it had never been known to be otherwise than dry at that season of the year. Mélanie and Maximin make no mention of having, after the Apparition, seen water where just before had been dry land. It is probable that, after the departure of the luminous figure, they did not think of looking at the spot. It is certain, however, that people on the following day saw water flowing at the *Petite Fontaine*, as at the time of great thaws. From that day to this, it has continued to flow without the intermission of a single hour. At an early stage of the history of La Salette, this water was analysed and declared by the highest chemical authority of the time to be perfectly pure and free from any ingredient capable of acting medicinally upon the human body. This was the water soon to become world-famous, to be sent to different parts, and to be looked upon as an important agent in most of the cures reputed miraculous in connection with La Salette.

In the afflux of people to the mountain, which

began at once and in such a marked manner, we may distinctly see the beginning of the great pilgrimage movement of the last fifty years.

Soon people began talking of remarkable cures in connection with La Salette. The first was that of Marie Laurent, a woman of Corps. This person had been ill for the previous twenty-two years, during which time she had suffered much from rheumatism. She had ended by becoming paralysed and almost bed-ridden. She could not move without crutches, and had to be lifted into bed like a child. Her case was well known in the town.

In October, 1846, within a month from the day when Mélanie and Maximin had related for the first time their marvellous experiences by Mount Gargas, we find Marie Laurent making a novena to the Blessed Virgin under the invocation of Notre-Dame de la Salette. She was asking for her restoration to health. From her own account she was moved to do this as by an interior impulse. Three more novenas followed for the same object.

We are on the last day of the third novena, December 11th. It was in the afternoon, and the suffering woman was alone. The members of a religious association to which she belonged, that of the White Penitents, had, with a certain number of the inhabitants of Corps, gone that morning on a pilgrimage to the site of the Apparition. Marie Laurent knew that she was having part in their

prayers. At a certain moment, as she lay and prayed, a change came over her. She felt that she had recovered the use of her limbs.

She arose, dressed herself, and went at once to the neighbouring church to pour out her soul in joy and thanksgiving. There she awaited the return of the little multitude from the mountain. Hearing their voices at a distance she went out to meet them. Great was the surprise of the pilgrims to see a person, who, until then, had been known to all as a helpless cripple, appear as one in perfect health, and take her place at once between Mélanie and Maximin, who headed the band. The *Magnificat* burst from the throng and the church bells pealed forth. The cure of Marie Laurent, which proved to be, in every sense, a radical one, was a point of departure in the history of the new devotion. Other cases of a like nature followed quickly. Others did as this woman had done : they hoped, prayed, and obtained.

Mgr. Brouillard, Bishop of Grenoble, lost no time in appointing an ecclesiastical commission to enquire into these facts. Half the members composing the commission belonged to the Great Seminary of Grenoble, and the other half to the cathedral chapter of that town. Each half had to do its work apart, and draw up a separate report. Two of the body, Abbé Berthelot, professor of history at the Great Seminary, and M. Orsel, Superior of that seminary, and at the same time

honorary canon of the cathedral, were appointed missionary delegates to enquire into the circumstances of the remarkable cures, said to be effected in connection with La Salette. With this object they visited, in the course of a year, as many as nine dioceses in the south of France, in order to verify every case by personal observation.

This proves how, in a few months, the devotion born of the recital of Mélanie and Maximin had already spread. In the summer of 1847 it received the marked approbation of two prelates. One of these was the Bishop of La Rochelle, who, after visiting La Salette, wrote a pamphlet having for title, *Nouveau Récit de l'apparition de la Sainte Vierge sur les Alpes*. The other was the Bishop of Langres, who, before a canonical verdict had been delivered concerning the Apparition, constituted himself from the pulpit its exponent and apologist.

He, moreover, in July, 1847, instituted in his diocese, supported in the matter by a Papal Brief, a confraternity, having for object atonement for the crimes specially stigmatised in the message at La Salette, namely, swearing, blasphemy and profanation of the Sabbath.

The year 1847 has still something further to show us relative to the progress made by the new devotion. On September 19th, the first anniversary of the Apparition, upwards of 50,000 persons assembled on the mountain of La Salette.

It is well to say here that the inhabitants of the

neighbouring hamlets, as well as those of the town of Corps, had been converted not only to belief in the Apparition, but also to a completely Christian manner of life. Blasphemy and swearing were already among them things of the past, and the Sunday services were, without exception, well attended. Hitherto pilgrims had gone to the *Planeau* by Mount Gargas singly, or in bands. On the first anniversary day, September 19th, the gathering there took the form of an imposing religious demonstration. By this time also priests were not afraid to show themselves on the spot in surplice and stole.

Mass followed Mass, the Holy Sacrifice being celebrated in a temporary chapel made of planks. During the few hours thus spent in religious exercises on a spot already considered sacred, the crowd gave unequivocal signs that devotion to Our Lady, under the invocation of Notre-Dame de la Salette, had already taken root in the hearts of thousands.

By the end of the year, the Commission of Enquiry had drawn up its report, which declared that a certain number of the cases examined answered to all the conditions of distinctly supernatural cures.

The Bishop of Grenoble refrained for the moment from pronouncing doctrinally on the subject. In the meantime the devotion spread, and the number of cures increased.

One of the most remarkable of these early cases, and one considered miraculous, was that of Antoinette Bollénat of Avallon, in the Yonne. This woman had been ill for twenty years, and her case was considered hopeless. On the evening of November 11th, 1847, a priest was called in to administer to her the last Sacraments. She made her confession between successive attacks of syncope. Instead of dying as was expected, she continued in the same state, and began a novena to Notre-Dame de la Salette, drinking at the same time a few drops of the already famous water of the Petite Fontaine by Mount Gargas. This went on for nine days.

A view of this woman's previous state will show in relief the supernatural character of her cure. Her state of confirmed ill-health and incessant suffering had begun when she was twelve years old; she was thirty-two at the time of which we write. For long years she had suffered from continual sickness and frequent attacks of syncope, and had all the while been unable to take solid food. In time her condition had become complicated by an abdominal tumour. In 1844 she became unable to move at all. The following three years were passed by her in bed and lying on her back. To add to her suffering, the under side of her body through constant lying became covered with sores.

Antoinette Bollénat was a person of singular piety, and bore her trials with exemplary patience.

On the evening of November 11th, 1847, as we have shewn, her end was considered imminent. During the novena that followed, she appeared to get worse. Though perfectly resigned to die, she believed, however, that she was about to get well. On one occasion, when the novena was about half way through, her medical man, Dr. Gagniard, calling, found her, as he thought, so near death that his parting words to those around were :—"I can do nothing more. Let her die quietly."

We are on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin and on the last day of the novena. At about two o'clock on that day she felt the want of food. At her request a cup of broth, with bread in it, was brought her. She swallowed it without ill-effects. This was the first time in fourteen years that she had been able to take anything of the kind.

Believing that her looked-for cure was about to be effected, three times that afternoon she attempted to rise, but each time without success. For a moment the idea flashed through her mind as to whether the firm belief she entertained that she was about to be restored to health was a delusion.

"The thought was as a lightning flash," she says, and adds :—"My confidence in God came back, and I resolved to wait patiently." She then began invoking the Blessed Virgin as *Notre-Dame de la Salette*.

At about half-past four in the afternoon her pains and palpitations suddenly ceased. She then put

her hand to the place of the tumour, which just before she had been able to feel, and found, as far as touch could tell her, that every sign of it had disappeared. She remained quiet until those about her had left the room, having, however, taken the precaution to ask some one in her confidence to place clothes within her reach.

When alone, she rose, fell back on the bed a moment through weakness, rose again, dressed herself, and then went on her knees in thanksgiving. Her brother's wife, Josephine Bollénat, entered at the moment to light a fire, believing, of course, that the sufferer was in bed. What was not, therefore, her surprise when she heard Antoinette ask for her shoes? This surprise was greater still when she saw her sister-in-law come towards her walking with a firm step. Her feelings expressed themselves in a shriek. On this her husband, thinking that his sister must have breathed her last, came into the room. Antoinette, enjoying the astonishment of those around her, seated herself by the fire. She afterwards partook of the ordinary evening meal, and passed a good night.

The next day she arose in perfect health. When spoken to on the subject of the Blessed Virgin, she would reply, "I cannot thank her! All I can do is to look at her statue."

Her medical man, Dr. Gagniard, after carefully examining her, distinctly stated that there remained no trace of her former complicated state of disease.

He even went so far as to say on this subject to Abbé Gagniard, curé of Saint-Martin :—" In truth, if it were necessary, I would sign with my blood that this cure is a miraculous one."

The tumour which had thus suddenly disappeared was of seven years' growth. As remarkable as its sudden disappearance was the equally sudden disappearance of the sores with which the sufferer's back and loins had been covered, and which nothing up to that time had been able to heal. It had been no unusual thing for the person changing the patient's linen—which sometimes had to be torn from the body—to see particles of flesh adhering to it. From the evening when Antoinette Bollénat, rising from her bed and dressing herself, stood erect a sound woman, there was no sign of a sore upon her.

This case, brought before the Ecclesiastical Commission of Grenoble, was classed as supernatural. A commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Sens to consider it, also pronounced it supernatural.

Apart from numerous less striking cases, no less than sixty cures as remarkable as that of Antoinette Bollénat were recorded during the years 1848 and 1849.

Among those who visited La Salette in the summer of 1848 was Abbé Dupanloup, then one of the canons of the cathedral chapter of Paris, but about to be raised to the See of Orleans. His impressions and opinions on this occasion, as

recorded by himself, constitute a chapter of value in the cause of La Salette.

During the few days that he spent on the mountain he was fired by no enthusiasm, and took a dispassionate view of everything. Mélanie appeared to him dull rather than otherwise, and Maximin restless and inquisitive. Side by side with this view of the couple in their ordinary human aspect was another, in which the priest saw them rise untaught into the realms of theology and metaphysics, and heard them speak calmly and unerringly on everything relating to the Apparition. This dual character which they displayed formed one of the points that most impressed him. Writing to a friend on the subject of this his visit to La Salette, he said : " The farther I go from the spot and the more I reflect on what I there saw and heard, the more I feel a conviction borne in upon me as if by violence. I keep saying to myself that it is very difficult not to see the hand of God in the whole affair."

We continue to quote from the same source : " All the boy and girl say, and all I see and hear, is only to be explained by the fact of their story being true." Further on, in reference to their manner of describing the apparition, M. Dupanloup says : " They become suddenly so grave, so serious, and in spite of themselves, as it were, so singularly simple and ingenuous, and there is something in their manner so full of respect for themselves as

well as for what they say, that their words are listened to with a sort of religious awe."

"In speaking of the great event to which they bear witness," continues the same authority, "this singular respect of theirs for their own utterances is such that, when one or the other of them happens to make one of those astonishing and unexpected replies which confound interrogators, cut short indiscreet questioning, and solve in the simplest and most complete manner the most difficult problems, the speaker shows no sign of triumph or self-consciousness. In speaking of the Apparition—which, by the way, they never seem ready to do—they appear to have no longer the defects of their age. It must be remembered that never have criminals at the bar of justice been so questioned, cross-questioned, and brow-beaten, as have been these two peasant children in the course of the last two years. To questions insidiously combined beforehand, they have always been ready with prompt and conclusive replies."

M. Dupanloup had been struck from the first by Mélanie's and Maximin's persistent refusal to divulge the secrets confided to them by the Apparition. We are now about to see the future illustrious Bishop of Orleans try to conquer the boy by subtlety. He happened to have with him a travelling bag which opened and shut by means of a secret spring, and which singularly interested the little peasant lad. Maximin again and again

entreated to be allowed to open this bag and thus discover the secret of the spring. "My child," said the priest on one of these occasions, "that is *my* secret. You will not tell me yours and I shall not tell you mine." "It is not the same thing," was the reply. "And why not?" persisted the learned interlocutor. "I am forbidden to tell my secret and you are not forbidden to tell yours," sturdily retorted the little peasant. Ten times within the next few hours the boy came back to the charge. The reply was always the same :—"I will tell you my secret when you tell me yours." Each time at these the tempter's words the child's curiosity vanished, giving place to a strong religious influence that seemed to pervade his whole being. At length, seeing Maximin immovable, the priest said :—"But, my child, since you want me to tell you my secret, tell me at least a part of yours." "I cannot," came forth as the sole reply.

Worsted, the astute Abbé tried another point of attack. One day he displayed a number of gold coins on the table so as to attract Maximin's notice. The boy looked with deep interest at the little heap of gold, and then began spreading out the coins and piling them up. The moment was propitious. "My child," said the priest, "if you were to tell me your secret, or what you think you might tell of it, I would give you all that money for you and your father."

"I then saw," says M. Dupanloup, "a most

curious moral phenomenon. The boy was literally absorbed by the sight of the gold pieces. He delighted in looking at them, touching them and counting them. On hearing my words he became suddenly sad and left the table. Then the answer came forth :—"Sir, I cannot !" In reference to this scene, he who was shortly afterwards to become one of the most brilliant ornaments of the French episcopate, says :—"I felt the child's attitude to be nobler than my own." He then put his hand on Maximin's head, traced the sign of the cross on his forehead, blessed him, and said :—"I hope the Blessed Virgin will forgive me for thus trying to make you tell your secret. Be faithful all your life to the graces you have received."

It should be mentioned here that M. Dupanloup had been keeping Maximin by him for about two days in the hope of being able to induce him to divulge his secret. The letter from which we have just quoted was published in the *Ami du Peuple* of April 7th, 1849. In it the writer went on to say :—"Were I called upon to give a formal verdict of yes or no as to the revelation at La Salette, and were I to be judged according to the strict sincerity of the verdict, I would say yes rather than no, and, in so saying, I should not fear to be condemned at the judgment seat of God for imprudence."

CHAPTER II.

THE eye of the Catholic world was by this time on La Salette. Wishes began to be expressed on all sides that a church or chapel might be erected on the site of the Apparition.

Although the Bishop of Grenoble had not yet spoken doctrinally on the great question of the Apparition, he had almost at once founded on the mountain which had, as it were, become famous in a day, an association of prayer, under the title of Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice de la Salette, and this association had, in a remarkably short time, numbered as many as 80,000 adherents.

The question of the phenomenal cures, attributed to the intercession of Notre-Dame de la Salette, was by this time occupying the attention of men of science. The number of these cures was such that, according to a document of the time, the most summary account of those that took place in a single year would fill a volume.

We will here cite two cases that seem to us to be singularly interesting and conclusive.

One is that of Sister St. Charles Pierron, of the *Congrégation Hospitalière* of St. Joseph of Avignon. This religious had been ill for eight years, keeping her bed, and at the time of which we write was in the last stage of pulmonary decline. This was at the beginning of the year 1847. The patient's mouth and tongue were covered with ulcers. All the nourishment she could take was a few spoonfuls of liquid in the course of each twenty-four hours. Early in the February of the year with which we have to do she received the last Sacraments. The following day her superioress, the Rev. Mother Penaud, suggested that she should begin a novena to Notre-Dame de la Salette. The good nun admitted afterwards that in making this suggestion her principal motive had been the hope of seeing the Apparition of La Salette confirmed by another supernatural cure. She to whom was made the suggestion replied that she had not the slightest wish to recover, and thus postpone her entrance into Heaven.

The Rev. Mother came again and again to the charge, but with no better result. She then put the sick nun under obedience, and gently ordered her to make the novena in question.

Sister St. Charles obeyed, and from the moment she began drinking the water of La Salette and joining in the nine days' prayer with the rest of the community she firmly believed that she was about to be restored to health. Her bodily state, how-

ever, became worse. On Thursday, the seventh day of the novena, she threw up blood in such quantity that the Superioress, believing the end to be near, gently said : " I think the Blessed Virgin's way of curing you will be to effect your entrance into Heaven."

Sister St. Charles in the meantime retained her conviction that her recovery was nigh. She said as much, and moreover that she hoped to assist at Mass and communicate on the last day of the novena ; and, with this hope in view, she did not forget to ask that her religious habit and veil, which she had not needed for so long a time, might be put within her reach.

The next dawn found her still worse and throwing up blood in an alarming manner. It happened that that day Mgr. de Prilly, Bishop of Châlons, was to celebrate Mass in the convent chapel. For this reason the Rev. Mother decided that the general communion of the nuns for Sister St. Charles, which was to have closed the novena the following day, should take place that morning instead.

The sick nun was grieved at this arrangement, thwarting as it did her cherished hope of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice on the last day of the novena. As she lay combining a plan in order to be able to effect her object on the morrow, and having heard her fellow religious go downstairs on their way to the chapel, she realised at a certain moment that

her sufferings had suddenly ceased. She tried to move, and found that she could do so easily. She then exclaimed with accents of joy, "I am cured," half killing with fright a sick nun in the same room, who believed her to be near death. She arose and quickly dressed herself.

In her written account of these moments she says: "I cannot describe the movement that suddenly shook my whole being; but I can affirm that instantaneously I felt my head, throat, and chest regain their natural action, my limbs their strength, and my voice its power."

She at once went down to the chapel, took her place with the other religious, and remained half an hour on her knees. When the others had left the choir she rose and threw her arms round the Rev. Mother's neck.

"You must begin by giving thanks," said that lady.

"I have already done so," was the reply. "I have assisted at part of a Mass and said the *Te Deum*."

The nun thus suddenly restored to life and vigour asked for food, and afterwards made a hearty meal. Her medical man, Dr. Gerard, found her that morning at work with other members of the community and showing every sign of perfect health. She then underwent at his hands a strict medical examination, the result of which was to show that she was free from any symptom of disease.

When asked if the cure could have been brought about by natural means, the doctor distinctly answered in the negative.

Another medical man, Dr. Roche, honorary head doctor of the Avignon hospital, who had carefully followed the case, was called in to see Sister St. Charles. He reported as follows :—"The unexpected change in the person of Sister St. Charles from a state judged by medical science to be hopeless to one of perfect health, functional and organic, was effected suddenly and without human intervention. Consequently it must be considered as belonging to the order of miraculous cures."

A case perhaps even more remarkable than this one is that of Sister François de Sales, of the first Visitation Convent in Paris. This nun had for several years been suffering from enlargement of the heart with lesions of the valves. In the early part of 1849 her condition became worse. She was then at the Visitation Convent of Rennes and under the treatment of two doctors, Bruté by name, father and son, in whose report, drawn up afterwards, the following statements occur : "The displacement of the ribs became very marked ; it was as if the heart were trying to force its way through ; the whole arterial system on the left side became hypertrophied ; the legs were swollen to above the knees." The report also stated that, through being unable to lie down, the patient had passed a hundred days and nights in an armchair.

We find the sufferer in this state in the early part of March, 1849. Suddenly her condition became more alarming. At this juncture she heard from a sister to the effect that Mass was about to be offered for her recovery on nine consecutive days on the mountain of La Salette, and that the members of her family were about to make a novena for the same intention. The writer of the letter asked the sufferer to join in this nine days' prayer. She at the same time sent her some of the already far-famed water of La Salette.

Sister Marie St. François de Sales felt at first but little inclined to comply with her sister's request, her wish being, as she afterwards said, to die. She consented, however, to join in the novena, which was to be made simultaneously by three Visitation communities as well as by the members of her own family. The nine days' prayer commenced March 21st.

On the evening of the 26th, at about seven in the evening, the nun showed every sign of approaching dissolution. The following details are taken from the written account of the religious in attendance as nurse: "Her eyes became fixed, her mind began to wander, and she showed every sign of approaching death. She received Extreme Unction and absolution *in articulo mortis*, after which the members of the community present left her for the night, not expecting to find her alive the next morning. After a few hours' agitation she had an

attack of syncope, and her face became covered with what seemed to be a death-sweat. The Rev. Mother put a lighted candle close to her face, and her eyes, which were open, were in no way affected by the flame. "We then lighted a taper," continues the authority from which we have just quoted, "and began to recite the prayers for the dying."

Dr. Bruté, the medical man constantly in attendance, called the next morning, and said the patient's life could not be depended on from one five minutes to another. Meanwhile, the apparently dying woman's lips were continually being moistened with water of La Salette.

Later on in the day, there was a slight rallying. Advantage was taken of it to ask the sufferer if she would like to receive the Blessed Eucharist, and on her reply being in the affirmative, the Holy Viaticum was administered to her. This was after she had been supposed to be in her death-agony for twenty-four hours.

No other than this religious could tell us what went on within her at that supreme moment. In her account written after her recovery, she says:—"I could neither see the priest nor the Sisters round about me; but I knew that I was about to communicate." No sooner had she received the Sacred Host than her eyes became opened to her real condition. She says in the after record alluded to: "I understood that I had been close unto death.

After making me see my extremely perilous condition, Our Lord said to me : ‘It is I who can and will cure thee’ (‘C’est Moi qui peux et qui veux te guérir.’) I answered : ‘*Fiat.*’ I could have made no other answer. Immediately a great change took place in the whole of my left side. It seemed as if my heart turned round and resumed its right place ; but with so violent a movement as to terrify me. Nevertheless, by a sudden sense of general well-being in me, I understood that I was cured. In truth I was.” Shortly afterwards, she told her superioress that she was free from suffering of any kind.

It was found at once that the swelling of the legs had disappeared, together with the deformity of the ribs, that a cauterized part had become suddenly healed, and that the heart seemed to have resumed its normal functions.

That day the nun, literally snatched from death by a force in which no human element had sway, ate well, and the following night she slept well. The next day her ordinary medical attendant, Dr. Bruté, calling, and seeing her standing up and apparently in perfect health, said : “Madam, you are to me as one come back from the grave !”

In the medical report drawn up, and signed by Doctors Bruté, father and son, July 3rd, 1849, we read in reference to this case :—“On calling the next day we could detect in Madame Marie de St. François de Sales no sign of disease. She could

walk up two flights of stairs without experiencing any increase in the heart's action, and although three months have passed since then, she is now not only in perfect health, but perhaps physically the strongest member of her community."

The Archbishop of Rennes ordered a canonical examination of the case to be made, the result of which was, to conclude in the words of M. Frain, Vicar-General of Rennes, that the manner in which this remarkable cure had been effected, could receive no explanation from pathological and physical laws.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE cures reputed to be miraculous in connection with La Salette were being talked of far and near, and while the number of visitors to the "holy mountain" was continually increasing, the burden of the message delivered on that mountain was being preached from the pulpit by priests and even by bishops. At the same time facts were confirming the truth of the message.

The Apparition had foretold the total failing of the potato crops, and had said: "By Christmas there will be none." In order to see the fulfilment of these words we have only to look at two ordinances of the French Government, dated January 19th, 1847. One of these was to prevent the exportation of potatoes from France, and the other to facilitate their importation into France.

The voice at La Salette that had predicted the total failure of the potato crops had also said: "Let him who has wheat sow it not. The birds will eat what is sown, and, should a few blades spring up, the grain from them will become dust in the threshing."

For fulfilment of these words we have to look to a form of wheat disease, before unknown, which suddenly came into notice early in the fifties under the name of *Pictin*, or *maladie des chaumes*. According to official documents, the new scourge caused considerable damage to the wheat crops as early as 1850. On this subject a correspondent of the *Univers*, writing from the Pas de Calais in 1856, says: "You have only to go into the first wheat field you see, pick a few ears of wheat, open the corolla of those marked with a black spot at the bottom, and you will see *animalculæ* swarm forth like yellow powder."

The prophetic page unfolded at Mount Gargas had foretold a great famine in France, which was to be preceded by great mortality among children under the age of seven. The words of the Apparition were: "They will be seized by trembling and die in the arms of those who hold them. Grown up people will do penance by hunger."

We will look to facts. Early in the year following that of the Apparition children died in great numbers in the department of the Isère. The disease that carried them off was known as the *Suette*. A little later this malady became complicated by cholera, and caused, far and wide throughout France, immense mortality to infant life. The children about to fall victims to it were first seized with icy coldness, then with trembling, and generally died about two hours after being first attacked.

With respect to the famine predicted we have only to look to statistics. According to the *Constitutionnel*, an official organ of the Government, as many as 60,000 persons died of hunger in 1854, and as many as 80,000 the following year. The scarcity of food continuing, it was afterwards computed from official documents that in the years 1854, 1855 and 1856 famine made more than 30,000 victims in France.

The prediction at La Salette, that the grapes would rot and that the walnuts would turn bad, were also to have their fulfilment. In 1851 the walnut disease made its appearance. In 1857 a form of vine disease known as *oidium* had shown itself, and this was followed by other scourges of the viti-culturist, including the phylloxera.

The fulfilment of these prophecies must ever form a strong material argument in favour of the apparition of La Salette.

The new devotion was about to meet with a storm of opposition. Contradictors of every kind were to try to crush it. In this we are justified in seeing one of the surest signs of its being Heaven-born.

CHAPTER IV.

MÉLANIE and Maximin had been under careful religious training for four years, when in 1850 circumstances led to the one-time cowherd lad going in company with others to see the curé of Ars. It was hoped that the far-famed man of God would throw some light upon Maximin's destiny, for hitherto the boy had proved a puzzle to those concerned in him. He remained restless, wayward, and though not without good instincts and a certain quickness of intelligence, and a certainly good heart, seemed incapable of steady application. At times he wished to be a priest and even a missionary, and at other times a soldier.

It was evening when the little party reached Ars. They were at once told by a young priest, Raymond by name, acting as the curé of Ars' vicaire, that Abbé Vianney could not be seen by them until the following day. In the short conversation that ensued between Maximin and the vicaire, about as much harm was done to a holy cause as it was

possible to do in the course of a few minutes. This is judging from a merely human standpoint. In reality good was to come out of an apparent evil.

Abbé Raymond happened to be an unbeliever in the Apparition of La Salette, and with as little tact as politeness, he managed to let his views be known at once. After letting the boy explain himself with respect to the event of La Salette, he said abruptly : "I am no believer in that story."

"Very well," said the other hotly ; "let it be granted then that I am a liar, and that I saw nothing at all on the mountain."

The young priest needed no more than this in order to set the story afloat, which he quickly did, that Maximin had retracted concerning the Apparition. It is, moreover, more than probable that before retiring to rest that night the curé heard the vicaire's version of what had occurred.

During the hours that followed Maximin did not sleep. Having been told that the curé of Ars knew everything, he said to himself : "He will know whether it was the Blessed Virgin I saw or only a phantom." Early the next morning he was kneeling at the curé's feet.

One of the first questions put to him was as to whether he had seen the Blessed Virgin.

"I do not know whether I have seen her," was the reply. "I saw someone—a lady (*une dame*.)" "If you know that it was the Blessed Virgin, tell

the people so, in order that they may believe in La Salette."

Abbé Vianney took these words to be a retractation on Maximin's part of his statements concerning the Apparition. He did not know, as so many others did, that Mélanie and Maximin, when questioned on this subject, had never made any other reply than that they had seen a "beautiful lady." For years this remained their favourite term for expressing what they had seen. Left to themselves, they would probably never have dared come to a formal conclusion that the "beautiful lady" was the Blessed Virgin. Thus on a track of misunderstanding, the boy and the priest were to continue so for the moment. Whether or not this interview had a sacramental character, Abbé Vianney refused to divulge anything concerning it until later on when he had Maximin's permission to do so.

Maximin, on his side, denied all retractation, adding that the curé of Ars had not been able to hear him well through being deaf, and that he had spoken indistinctly through want of teeth. Almost his first words on returning to Grenoble were :—"Now they speak contemptuously of La Salette; but La Salette is like a flower, which in winter is covered up with dung and rubbish, but which in summer springs forth more beautiful than ever."

We find Maximin shortly afterwards a pupil at the Little Seminary of Grenoble, placed there by

his bishop, Mgr. Brouillard. In the meantime, Abbé Raymond, the young vicaire of Ars, with the object of throwing discredit on the Apparition of La Salette, published an account of Maximin's visit, and sent copies of his pamphlet to numerous members of the clergy. On this the Bishop of Grenoble wrote to the curé of Ars, who, however, refused to discuss the subject of Maximin's interview with him until, as has been said, he had received the boy's permission to do so. The permission was readily given, and M. Mélun, arch-priest of Corps, and Abbé Rousselot, of Grenoble, became bearers of the same in written form to Ars, delegated to that effect by their bishop. In his letter Maximin said that M. Vianney must have misunderstood him, if the latter had taken any words of his to mean a retraction of his statements concerning the Apparition.

In his conversation with the two priests, the curé of Ars admitted that he might have been mistaken in his interpretation of the boy's answer to the question as to whether he had seen the Blessed Virgin. A few days afterwards he wrote as follows to the Bishop of Grenoble:—"Monseigneur, I have blessed and distributed a great many pictures representing the event of La Salette; I have distributed bits of the stone on which the Blessed Virgin was seen seated; I have often spoken of the Apparition in my sermons. I think, Monseigneur, there are few priests in your diocese who have done

more for the devotion than I have. When the little cowherd told me he had not seen the Blessed Virgin, I was ill for two days. After all, Monseigneur, there is no great harm done, for if the affair of La Salette be of God, man will be powerless against it."

About this time, or shortly afterwards, that is, in 1850, Canon Bez, of Lyons, writing to Abbé Rousselot, asked whether it was true that Maximin had retracted in presence of the curé of Ars. In the same letter he said:—"So convinced am I of the truth of the Apparition, that I should be prepared to defend it even in the case of Maximin's denial. Such a prodigy of falsehood on the part of the two *voyants* would be more astounding than the miracle of the Apparition, against which all hell is raging." Abbé Rousselot wrote in reply:—"Maximin told M. Vianney exactly what he has been telling us for the last four years, and what you and I after our long and minute enquiries have both written. When questioned, he said that he had seen someone on the mountain—that is, the '*belle dame*.'

"By the words 'someone' he means just what your account and mine mean; but when the question is put to him as to whether he saw the Blessed Virgin he hesitates in replying 'Yes.'"

To undo still further the ill effects of this misunderstanding, the Bishop of Grenoble wrote to Mgr. Divié, Bishop of Belley, asking him to inter-

fere in the matter. There were at Belley at the time as guests of Mgr. Divié, Mgr. Chatrousse, Bishop of Valence, and another prelate. These helped to throw light on the question. The result of their deliberations in common was given by Mgr. Divié as follows, in a letter to the Bishop of Grenoble: "We look upon it as certain that the two children (Mélanie and Maximin) had not agreed together to deceive the public, and that they really saw someone on the mountain who spoke to them. Was it the Blessed Virgin? Everything points to the conclusion that it was." Mgr. Divié went on to advise the Bishop of Grenoble to build a chapel on the site of the Apparition, in the case of the pilgrimage movement thither continuing.

We will here dwell for a few moments on the curé of Ars' attitude with respect to Maximin. That the evident misunderstanding between him and the lad caused him to have doubts concerning the reality of the Apparition is certain, though not to the extent that enemies pretended. For the following eight years, however, the holy man was at times more or less troubled on the subject. He was known to say in reference to it: "When doubt leaves me, peace returns; but when the devil casts me back on my doubt, then am I as one dragged along among stones and brambles."

In October of 1858 it began to be said in different quarters that the curé of Ars had quite

come back to his former belief in the Apparition of La Salette. It appears that for some little time previously M. Vianney had been subject to great mental distress and interior suffering, from which he had earnestly prayed to be delivered, and that perfect peace and calm had suddenly come to him on making an act of faith in the Apparition by Mount Gargas. It was, to use his own words, as if his back had been delivered of a sack of lead.

About this time M. Guillemin, Vicar-General of Belley, delegated to this effect, went to see the curé of Ars, with the object of eliciting from him details concerning the change that had come over him relative to La Salette. From his report of the interview we gather the following details: M. Vianney, suffering more intensely one night than usual, and praying more intensely than usual for his deliverance, the thought occurred to him of making an act of faith in the Apparition of La Salette. He said the word *Credo*, and the effect was instantaneous, his mental anguish ceasing at once. He then asked Heaven to send in his way a priest of the diocese of Grenoble, his object in making the request being no doubt to be able to undo to a certain extent the effect created by his previous state of doubt. The following day a priest of the diocese of Grenoble called on the curé of Ars in his sacristy, and asked him what he thought of the Apparition of La Salette. The

curé replied : “ Not only may it be believed in, but it ought to be believed in.”

M. Vianney afterwards considered himself to be the object of a signal favour on Heaven’s part, due to the intervention of Notre-Dame de la Salette.

To return to the body of our subject. Owing to the increase of opposition to the devotion of La Salette, consequent on Maximin’s visit to Ars, Cardinal Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, thought it time to interfere. He proposed that the secrets of which the two *voyants* claimed to be in possession should be laid before Pius IX. The Pope having been communicated with on the subject, Cardinal Bonald wrote shortly afterwards to M. Rousselot to the effect that the reputed secrets of La Salette should be revealed to His Holiness.

When Mélanie and Maximin, hitherto impervious to all arguments on the subject, understood that the Church had a right to command in such matters, they consented to reveal their respective secrets to the Pope, but to him only, stipulating at the same time that the letters containing these secrets should be sealed by them and given into the hands of His Holiness by the persons whose task it would be to convey the missives to Rome. Accordingly, shortly afterwards, on a day in July, 1851, Mélanie and Maximin were to be seen writing at separate tables in a room in the Bishop’s palace at Grenoble. Four witnesses were present, but at a distance from

the writers, two of these being vicars-general of the diocese.

The girl, by this time nineteen, while writing, asked the meaning of the word *infailliblement*. She was told that the sense of the word depended on that of other words going before it. *Arrivera infailliblement*, she said. Presently she asked the meaning of the word *souillé*. The sense of that, too, she was told, depended on the context. *Ville souillée*, she replied. Her last question was as to the spelling of the word *antichrist*.

The boy, as he wrote, asked how to spell the word *Pontiff*. His letter was divided into paragraphs, each numbered. All we know of it is that it began thus:—"Very Holy Father, September 19th, 1846, there appeared to me a lady (*une dame*). People say it was the Blessed Virgin. You will judge from what follows."

Of Mélanie's letter nothing is known. The Bishop entered, spoke a few words to the boy and the maiden, and blessed them both.

The letters being by this time finished and closed, Mgr. Brouillard sealed them with his arms and gave them into the hands of his vicars-general, M. Mélin and M. Rousselot, who were about to proceed to Rome as his delegates in order to lay the documents in question before the Holy Father.

M. Rousselot's account of what took place in Rome relative to this subject is of historic value. He said that Pius IX., before perusing the letters,

said :—"I must read these with a clear head," and that the Pontiff then went towards the window to have more light.

"They write with the candour and simplicity of children," were His Holiness' next words.

According to M. Rousselot, as the Pope read, his lips became contracted and his cheeks as if inflated. Having read to the end, he exclaimed: "It is question of calamities that threaten France. But France is not the only culprit. Germany, Italy, and the whole of Europe are likewise deserving of chastisement. I fear open impiety less than I do indifference and human respect. It is not without cause that the Church is called militant. You see here her captain." Pointing to his breast, the Holy Father thus designated himself. He continued, addressing M. Rousselot and alluding to that priest's recent work on La Salette:—"I have had your work read by Mgr. Frattini, Promoter of the Faith, who tells me that he is pleased with it, that it is a good book, and that it breathes truth throughout."

Alluding to Mgr. Frattini, M. Rousselot says:—"On my first visit to him he told me that, having attentively read my books on La Salette from beginning to end, as it was his duty to do, he saw no drawback to the Bishop of Grenoble's erecting a chapel of imposing dimensions on the site of the Apparition, or to as many *ex voto* offerings of gratitude being affixed to the walls of the building

thus erected, as there are miracles recorded in my books."

About the same time, Cardinal Lambruschini, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites and Minister of his Holiness, said to M. Rousselot: "For some time past I have been familiar with the affair of La Salette, and as a bishop, I believe in it. Moreover, I know the secrets of Mélanie and Maximin, the Pope having made me acquainted with them."

Thus the journey to Ars, which had at first seemed fraught with evil, was already productive of good. The fact of the secrets of La Salette not having been revealed, had up to that time deterred the Bishop of Grenoble from formally pronouncing on the question of the Apparition. Now, this canonical decision of his was not to be long in forthcoming. In the form of a pastoral letter, which had been submitted to Rome for approval, it was read for the first time from the pulpits of the diocese of Grenoble, November 10th, 1851. In it Mgr. Brouillard declared that the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin to the two little cowherds at La Salette, a mountain of the Alpine chain, was characterized by all the conditions of truth. He consequently authorized devotion to Notre-Dame de la Salette, and forbade in his diocese any protest against it by word or act.

Five prelates, including the Bishop of Belley, wrote at once to Mgr. Brouillard to congratulate

him on the step he had taken, and to promise him their warmest support.

A few months later, Mgr. Bruillard took a further step. In May, 1852, he issued a pastoral letter relative to the laying of the foundation stone of the commemorative building on the site of the Apparition, which in the beginning had been alluded to as a chapel, and which in the end was to assume the proportions of an imposing church. After tracing in brief lines the history of the Apparition, the bishop said that henceforward La Salette, as a site of pilgrimage, would be to the Christian world a "Sion's fortress"—"a city of refuge." He said too that a body of missionaries was about to be instituted, who were to be known as Missionaries of Notre-Dame de la Salette, whose very existence, as well as the building, with the erection of which they were then concerned, would serve as a perpetual remembrance of the merciful Apparition of the Blessed Virgin on the spot. The Bishop of Grenoble was, at that time, eighty-five years of age.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the new building took place on the 25th of the same month, and drew together some twenty thousand persons. Numbers of women were in white, and numbers of men in the garb of penitents. All the previous night crowds had been gathering to the spot. Bands of pilgrims sang as they drew near. Masses at Mount Gargas com-

menced at one o'clock in the morning and continued, so that by the time the rising sun had flushed the Alpine heights around, three thousand persons had communicated at improvised altars. When daylight shed splendour on the scene, the Bishops of Grenoble and Valence, in presence of a reverent multitude, laid the foundation stone of the future church of Notre-Dame de la Salette.

In a pastoral letter relative to the occasion Mgr. Bruillard said : "Seldom since the beginning of Christianity has a bishop been called upon to proclaim the truth of an Apparition of the august Mother of God. Happiness of this kind has been granted us by Heaven."

It had been known in certain circles that Pius IX. was favourable to the cause of La Salette. A succession of Papal Briefs and Rescripts was about to make this truth public. By a Rescript of August 24th, 1852, His Holiness declares the High Altar of the church of La Salette a privileged one in perpetuity ; and by another, dated two days later, he grants permission to all priests who go to La Salette to say a votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin on any day of the year, great festival days and those of the privileged *feriae* excepted. By a Brief of the same date the Sovereign Pontiff grants to members of the Confraternity of La Salette three plenary indulgences on certain conditions ; by another Brief, dated September 3rd, 1852, a plenary indulgence once a year to all who shall visit the church of La

Salette ; and by another, also dated September 3rd, 1852, a plenary indulgence on certain conditions to the faithful who take part in the exercises of the missions preached by the missionaries of La Salette.

There were three more Papal Briefs in the same month, two conferring spiritual powers on the missionaries of La Salette, and one raising the Confraternity, founded by Mgr. Bruillard soon after the Apparition, to an Archconfraternity, under the title of that of Our Lady of Reconciliation of La Salette.

A great and crowning favour on the part of Rome had yet to come. It came in the form of an Indult of December 2nd, 1852, granting permission to solemnize each year September 19th, the anniversary of the Apparition, in all the churches of the dioceses of Grenoble ; or to celebrate the same the following Sunday by a solemn Mass and the singing of the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin.

CHAPTER V.

THESE marks of Rome's approval, together with the manifestation that had recently taken place on the mountain, were not calculated to act as a sedative on opponents of the new devotion. Adverse pens were already busy. Almost immediately the first part of a work known as *La Salette-Fallivaux* appeared, having for object to discredit and falsify everything connected with La Salette, and the author of which was supposed to be a priest, Délion by name, writing under that of "Donadier."

The Bishop of Grenoble lost no time in condemning the work and in passing on the author of it, in the case of the latter's being a priest, sentence of excommunication. He, moreover, on the occasion, addressed a letter to the *Univers*, which that newspaper published, in which he stated that *La Salette-Fallivaux* contained as many lies as words.

Shortly afterwards the aged and much-revered prelate resigned his see of Grenoble, and was succeeded by Mgr. Ginoulhiac, who in the matter of La Salette was to tread exactly in his predecessor's footsteps.

The following year the second part of *La Salette-Fallivaux* appeared. The first part had dealt principally with Maximin's visit to Ars ; the second proved even more imaginative in the matter of falsification and lies. It took for its principal personage Mademoiselle Lamerlière, a lady of good family living at Saint-Marcellin, in the diocese of Grenoble. This person, who was not only elderly, but stout and unwieldy to the last degree, was made to perform the part of the Apparition. She was represented as travelling with extraordinary alacrity from Saint-Marcellin to La Salette, carrying a band-box containing the aërial costume which she was presently to don ; of appearing before the dazzled eyes of the cowherd children, and of speaking to them in the sublime words of the Apparition which we know ; and then of disappearing slowly from these children's sight, helped in her disappearance by a timely cloud.

This grotesque comedy had grown out of a few inadvertent words spoken by Abbé Lacroix, curé of the Albève, near Saint-Marcellin, and bitterly regretted by him afterwards, for he happened to be a firm believer in the Apparition of La Salette. Being one day at a social gathering composed of believers in and of opponents of the Apparition, he had proposed that the whole affair should be laid to the charge of Mademoiselle Lamerlière. He had fixed upon this lady as being the person in the world the least able to play the part of an Appari-

tion. At that time Mademoiselle Lamerlière was between fifty and sixty years of age, and so corpulent that when sitting down she had to be helped to rise from her chair. She quickly brought against the priest, Abbé Délion, and others acting with him, an action for defamation of character. The case was given against her on the ground that those against whom she brought the charge had not attempted to injure her reputation. She afterwards brought the matter before the Court of Appeal, and with like result. Mademoiselle Lamerlière ended by proving an *alibi*, showing by legal documents that on the day on which she was said to be on the mountain of La Salette she was in reality at Saint-Marcellin, retained there by important business.

The Bishop of Grenoble on this subject said : “ You may say openly, as coming from me, that the story concerning Mademoiselle Lamerlière is the stupidest, coarsest, and most openly contradicted by facts that has ever been invented by human malignity and bad faith.”

In the year in which the second part of *La Salette-Fallivaux* appeared, ecclesiastical authority refrained from noticing it. The next year another book of similar bearing made its appearance, from the pen of Abbé Cartellier, curé of St. Joseph's, Grenoble, and was entitled, *La Salette devant le Pape*.

The Bishop now thought fit to speak. In a pastoral letter, dated September 30th, 1854, he

condemned *La Salette devant le Pape*, on the ground that it contained propositions erroneous, rash, and scandalous, subversive of order and of ecclesiastical government, favouring Presbyterianism, and already condemned explicitly or implicitly by two Popes. The faithful were forbidden to read the book under pain of excommunication. The two volumes of *La Salette-Fallivaux* were included in the same condemnation.

A month later Mgr. Ginoulhiac issued another pastoral letter, having for object the refutation of another work from the mischievous pen of Abbé Délion. In the meantime the Bishop had written to Rome for advice. Pius IX., in reply, said that as Mgr. Ginoulhiac was in possession of the documents and facts, on the strength of which his predecessor in the see of Grenoble had pronounced in favour of the reality of the Apparition, there was no objection to the present prelate examining the subject afresh, and proving it a second time to the public.

Accordingly in a document in the form of a pastoral letter, dated November 4th, 1854, the Bishop of Grenoble put forth in battle array the proofs on which the Apparition at La Salette had been recognised as true by ecclesiastic authority, and then, in the most convincing and masterly manner possible, refuted all the arguments brought against it. He even dealt with the oft-repeated objection respecting the failings, real or imaginary,

of the cowherd children, Mélanie and Maximin. On the supposition that these two might be less humanly perfect than the world would have them, he said : “ Who does not know that, according to the testimony of the Gospel and of all theologians, graces of this kind may be granted to persons totally unworthy of them, and that this may be more especially the case when the immediate object in the bestowal of these graces is not so much to sanctify the recipients of them as to serve as warning and instruction to others?” “ Who does not know, too,” continued the Bishop, “ that we may make an evil use of Divine revelations, and even of those that concern us personally?” In conclusion, Mgr. Ginoulhiac condemned the *Mémoire du Pape sur l’Affaire de la Salette* as injurious to the Holy See and contrary to the canons of the Church, to the decrees of the Council of Lyons, and to the statutes of the diocese.

Shortly afterwards, at the ceremony of the opening of the first chapel of the Missionaries of La Salette, at Grenoble, Mgr. Ginoulhiac, after alluding to the many marks of approval which his predecessor, Mgr. Bruillard, had received from the Holy See, respecting devotion to Notre-Dame de la Salette, said that he too had had many and striking proofs from Rome to the same effect. “ In the letters which the Sovereign Pontiff has written to us on the subject,” he continued, “ he strongly urges us to maintain this devotion, which flourishes so

happily amongst us, to spread it more and more, and above all to defend it against the attacks of its enemies."

On the 19th of the following September, which was the ninth anniversary of the Apparition, Mgr. Ginoulhiac said in presence of an immense assembly of pilgrims on the mountain :—"Go back to your homes and proclaim everywhere the truth of the Apparition. Assert your belief in it. Let all know your conviction on the subject. Fear nothing. The Blessed Virgin will be with you." It was on this occasion that the Bishop of Grenoble said in reference to Mélanie and Maximin : "The mission of the cowherd children is at an end, and that of the Church begins. They (Mélanie and Maximin) may go their way and be lost sight of; they may even prove unfaithful to a great grace received; but the fact of the Apparition will not be shaken on that account. It is certain, undeniable, and nothing henceforward will be able to militate against it."

CHAPTER VI.

IN May, 1854, Dr. Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham, paid a visit to La Salette, in the company of two other Englishmen, and remained there four days. He tells us that on an average about sixty pilgrims a day arrived on the spot, and on Sundays more than a thousand. The meaning, sweetness, and simple grandeur of the religious ceremonies there seem to have been borne in upon his inmost soul. On the evening of his arrival, grouped with pilgrims and clergy around the by this time famous spring, he was induced to give, in French, expression to his feelings. He calls his mode of utterance on the occasion uncouth. Whether it was so or not, it caused some near him to shed tears. The following day, the Feast of the Ascension, when the pilgrims were gathered in the ravine of the Sezia, the men on one side of the Fountain and the women on the other, and singing verses, to which the hills responded, the effect was sufficiently impressive to cause one of Dr.

Ullathorne's English companions to exclaim: "Oh, that the English could see what takes place here! Protestantism is a cruel unbelief!"

The great petition, voiced shortly before by Bishop Wiseman, for prayers on the continent for England's conversion, had made its way to this remote spot, and on this occasion our three English pilgrims not only heard their country prayed for at La Salette, but heard also the mountains around distinctly echo the words, "*Prions pour la conversion de l'Angleterre.*"

The Bishop of Birmingham had previously had, at Corps, an interview with Mélanie, who though not yet twenty-three years of age, was already a professed nun under the name Sister Marie de la Croix. Dr. Ullathorne was favourably impressed by her, and seems especially to have been struck by her modest religious demeanour. He noticed the gleam in her lustrous dark eyes, and something in her face which told of interior suffering, as if, to use his own words, she had tasted of the Cross.

The echo of a remarkable cure which had taken place at La Salette not long before, still lingered on the mountain at the time when the three English visitors were there. It was that of Mademoiselle Marie Lauzur, of the town of St. Céré, in the department of the Lot, who at the time of which we write was a pupil of the Visitation Convent of Valence. She was then eighteen years of age. She had from childhood been troubled by weak and short sight,

but had nevertheless, by the help of strong glasses, been able to do much as others did, until April 17th, 1852.

On that day she suddenly lost the power of sight in one eye, and on the following day became quite blind. Dr. Dupré de Loire, her medical attendant, declared her to be suffering from amaurosis, and held out no hope of recovery. So complete was the paralysis that the open eyeballs proved perfectly insensible to light and touch.

Mademoiselle Lauzur struggled bravely against her state for two months, learning in the meantime to guide her movements by the sense of touch as do the totally blind. Hope was not dead within her, however, for she had been turning her thoughts towards the mountain of La Salette. She wished to go there on a pilgrimage, and, moreover, to perform the pilgrimage, not only as an act of faith and hope, but also as one of penance. In short, she wished to go there on foot. This was impossible; but what she did do was to walk from the town of Saint-Marcellin to La Salette, a distance of about 75 miles. She arrived at her destination July 1st, accompanied by two nuns and drenched to the skin, having encountered rain, wind, and fatigue of every kind in her toilsome ascent of the mountain. In her strong and child-like faith she believed that she was about to recover her sight the following day, the Feast of the Visitation. Instead of stopping to take food and change her clothes,

she went at once into the temporary chapel, and a few minutes afterwards received the Blessed Eucharist at the hand of the Rev. Père Sébillat, of the recently-instituted Congregation of Missionaries of La Salette. Great was the marvel that was taking place. Sight was restored to the blind girl then and there ! Mademoiselle Lauzur could not speak at first, so great was her emotion. After a few minutes she exclaimed : “ I see ! I see ! ” The first object she saw was the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Her cure proved as complete as it had been instantaneous. She returned to her convent with a better sight than she had ever had before, and no longer needing the help of glasses. This cure is attested by fifty-five witnesses, by the members of the Visitation community of Valence, and by Mademoiselle Lauzur’s medical men, the different documents of attestation being signed by the Bishop of Valence.

In 1860 Mgr. Bruillard died at the age of ninety-five, after expressing the wish that his heart might have its place in the church on the mountain in honour of Notre-Dame de la Salette, towards the erection of which he had done so much.

As since 1846 the until-then intermittent spring by Mount Gargas, known as the *Petite Fontaine*, had not for a single hour ceased to flow, so the course of graces and cures reputed to be miraculous had continued without interruption.

One of the remarkable cures belonging to the ten

years between 1860 and 1870 is that of a young nun known as Sister Marie de Saint-Victor, of the Congregation of Marie Réparatrice. We find this lady in the spring of 1867 at the Château of Préole, in Belgium, the residence of her uncle, the Comte d'Outremont. She had been taken there in a deplorable state of health by her mother, the Superioress-general of the Congregation of Marie-Réparatrice. She was then twenty-four years of age. She had been ill for six years, during which time some of the best medical skill in London, Paris, and Liège had been applied to her case in vain. She was suffering from paralysis of the spine.

At the time of which we write she was not only unable to move in her bed, but had to lie day and night in an iron apparatus, because of the extreme weakness of her back. Her nights were sleepless, and she was subject to paroxysms of pain of intense violence.

A novena to Notre-Dame de la Salette was begun for her, the sufferer joining in it in fact, though in spirit she had previously made the sacrifice of her life to God.

Towards the end of the nine days she appeared to be better, but before another week had passed she had relapsed into worse than her former state, her condition becoming complicated by *tetanus*. But neither mother nor daughter lost hope.

The first novena was followed by a second,

which was joined in not only by the different communities of the Congregation of Marie-Réparatrice, but by other religious houses as well. In the meantime Sister Marie de Saint-Victor got visibly worse. On the last day but one of the second novena she had an attack of *tetanus* of great violence, and her fingers, on which her teeth had closed, were drawn bleeding from her mouth. Those around thought that death was near. The sufferer sent word to her mother, who was ill in the same room, to let her know whether she thought there was still ground for hope. The mother's answer was in the affirmative. "Nor have I any doubt," said the daughter; "only, being so ill, I needed this assurance." A terrible night followed. The next morning (Feast of the Annunciation), being at the lowest possible ebb, and fearing another attack of *tetanus*, the all but dying nun expressed a wish to receive the Blessed Eucharist. She also sent a message to her mother to the effect that the latter was not to forget to call her and to tell her to get up. To this the mother replied: "Fear not, my child; I will call you."

Shortly before seven o'clock the Sacrament of the Altar entered this bed-chamber where life and death were struggling. When the young religious had received the Viaticum of the dying, mother and daughter prayed together and with all the intensity of faith of which they were capable.

After a little while the elder lady felt impelled to

tell her daughter to rise. She wished to obey the impulse yet dared not do so. In her perplexity and hesitation she turned in thought to her whom she and the sufferer near her were continually invoking as Notre-Dame de La Salette; and from her heart came the words in all simplicity: "I have confidence in you, O my Mother. Tell me when to call her and I will do so." Hardly had this prayer been framed and uttered than she seemed to see by her daughter's bed the figure of the Blessed Virgin, resplendent in light and as represented according to the Apparition at La Salette. At the same time she seemed to hear the words: "Call her, I will raise her up" ("*Appelle-la; je la soulèverai*"). "Pia," she said, no longer hesitating, and calling her daughter in a firm voice.

The daughter was up in a moment, and in another moment in her mother's arms. Suffering was gone; she had recovered the use of her limbs. Both, locked in a close embrace and shedding tears, blessed God. The sufferer of six years' standing, who just before had been thought to be dying, was suddenly well and able to dress herself. She assisted that morning at Mass at the parish church, where the *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving for her recovery. She at once resumed her former mode of life, and, in short, was radically cured. The facts of her case were related at length in a letter written by the Bishop of Liège to the Bishop of Grenoble, dated September 1st, 1867.

Two cases belonging to this period, and typical of a certain class of phenomenal cures, tempt the pen. One is that of a girl of fourteen, and comes to us authenticated by the testimony of a parish priest, speaking as an eye-witness, and by that of Abbé Guerdon, Vicar-General of the diocese in which the remarkable cure occurred. The priest is M. L. Collière, honorary canon, and, in 1868, the time to which we refer, curé of Saint-Pierre-du-Centre, the town in Martinique, which has since been destroyed by one of the most terrible catastrophes recorded in history. The girl in question, Amante Marie-Louise, whose surname is not given, and whose ordinary appellation was "Louise," was his parishioner. She had been for fifteen months ill, and during the previous ten completely paralysed. In the spring of 1868 she was sharing with her mother, also ill, a room in an asylum, which had lately been opened for the poor of the town in connection with the Conference of St. Vincent of Paul. The girl being gentle and patient, unable to move, with her lower limbs much wasted, was an object of general sympathy. She was in the habit of being lifted daily from her bed to a sofa by a window. Medical skill proving in her case of no avail, her mother made, in order to obtain her recovery, a novena in honour of Notre-Dame de la Salette. This novena over, she began another. In the meantime, her own condition becoming worse, she had to receive the last Sacraments.

This did not prevent her from continuing to hope and to pray for her daughter's cure, firmly believing as she did that this cure would be effected before the end of May.

On the 13th of the month and the third day of the second novena, Louise, on her sofa by the window, to which she had just before been carried like a child, suddenly exclaimed: "Mother, someone is lifting me up." Her voice trembled with emotion.

"Hold your tongue, silly one," said the mother. "Don't move, or you may fall and break an arm or leg."

Six days later, from the same spot, on the last day of the novena, the girl cried out in a tone of fright: "Mother, mother, someone is lifting me up! Someone is holding me by the waist! Look, I am being carried, mother! O my God! my God!"

The mother, apparently ill unto death, said: "My child, it is the Blessed Virgin, who is curing you. Get up, and come to me."

By this time Louise was standing upright, but trembling and pale as death. She dared neither walk nor sit down. She felt that she was being held up as by an invisible hand. After a few moments she rushed towards the bed whereon her mother lay, and from which she herself had been lifted helpless shortly before. The two, clasped in each other's arms, mingled their tears of joy and gratitude.

It was not long before a crowd had collected outside. "A miracle!" cried the people. "Let us go to the church and give thanks to Notre-Dame de la Salette."

Walking with a firm step and without help, and accompanied by the throng, Louise went at once to the neighbouring church and to the chapel within, dedicated to Notre-Dame de la Salette.

The parish priest, Abbé L——, coming on the scene, found his church full. Confronted with the girl in whom such a wonderful change had just taken place, he listened to the details of her case put forth by her, as he tells us, with angelic simplicity. In his report of the affair to the Vicar-General of the diocese, he says: "The next morning she came to church to assist at a Mass of thanksgiving." M. Guerdon, the Vicar-General, writing in reply from the residence of the Bishop of Saint-Pierre and of Fort de France, said: "Having read your report of the marvellous event which took place in your parish on the 21st of last month, I cannot but recognise in it the undoubted intervention of that good and tender Mother who, like her Divine Son, prefers revealing herself to the poor and simple. Your account exactly corresponds with what I have heard within the last few days from the young girl herself and her mother, who told me, moreover, that a large swelling on one of the hips disappeared at the time of the cure, leaving no trace behind it."

Another cure belonging to the same class is that of Pascaline Godefroy, who, in the spring of 1866, became an inmate of the hospital of Séez, in the department of the Orne. She was at the time twenty years of age, and had been ill for the previous two years, suffering from gastralgia and dyspepsia in their worst forms. Such was her weakened condition that she was unable to leave her bed, and had to be lifted from and into it like a child. Medical skill had done and continued to do its best for her, but without affording her any relief. The spring and summer of 1866 passed, and she remained in the same state.

It was the custom in the establishment to celebrate with great devotion the anniversary of the Apparition on the mountain of La Salette, the celebration being preceded by a novena of devotional exercises, which took place in the hospital chapel and around the statue of Notre-Dame de la Salette. Abbé Godbout, the hospital chaplain at the time, was to the front in this devotion.

September 19th was drawing near. Pascaline Godefroy, entering into the spirit of those around her, began to hope again and to pray for her recovery. When the novena commenced, she began taking part with the rest in the daily devotions, dragging herself to the chapel, though with difficulty. The morning of the eighth day from that time found her in as helpless a condition as at the beginning. She was in the chapel. Mass was

going on. The hospital chaplain, acting as officiating priest, had more difficulty than usual in administering to her the Blessed Sacrament as she sat stiff and helpless in her armchair. Had the end come then, it would not have surprised him, as he afterwards said.

After communicating, the girl seems to have lost all sense of what was going on around her. This state lasted for about a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time she was alone in the chapel, with the exception of two or three old people and the chaplain, who was kneeling a few paces behind her. Here comes in the phenomenal side of her case. She who could not kneel was being made to kneel—being pushed, as she herself says, as by an invisible hand. According to her statement, she felt that her legs were being bent, and that she was being forced on her knees on the stone step in front of her. In this attitude she remained some seconds. Then rising and going towards the chaplain she said to him: “I am cured!”

“Give thanks to God, my child,” replied the priest, who, in his official account, admits to having been about as surprised to see the girl standing beside him as he would have been by the appearance of a ghost. In truth, Pascaline Godefroy was cured, and radically so. A few minutes afterwards she laid her crutches by the altar of Notre-Dame de la Salette, before which she had prayed, before which she had been so

mysteriously impelled to kneel, and before which she had completely regained the use of her limbs.

The last two days of the novena were, in the hospital, days of triumph and thanksgiving. The details of this case were published at the time in the *Annales de Notre-Dame de la Salette*.

By this time the church on the mountain of La Salette had not only been growing in beauty and dimensions, but it could also look on a conventual establishment that had risen beside it for its body of missionaries.

In 1867 it was endowed with three fresh bells, having up to that time made its voice heard by a single one. The year before a subscription had been opened by the Catholics of Belgium, having at their head the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, with the object of presenting a pulpit to the commemorative church of Notre-Dame de la Salette. Accordingly, shortly afterwards a magnificent pulpit of sculptured Russian oak made its way to the church by Mount Gargas, having upon it the inscription : "This monument is the gift of the Belgian Episcopate and of Belgian Catholics."

About this time, too, a beautiful high altar rose in the choir with a series of *bas-reliefs* telling the different phases of the Apparition. Altar vessels of suitable richness being wanting, the need was quickly supplied by a massive gold chalice and monstrance studded with gems, which gems had a

previous history. They had been offered at the shrine of La Salette at different times by pilgrims and votaries as acts of thanksgiving. The diamond cross surmounting the cup of the chalice was the gift of the de Maistre family. The chalice, itself of solid gold and of 4 lbs. weight, was set with four hundred gems, for the most part emeralds and diamonds. This chalice and monstrance were long considered the richest in France.

The munificence of private Catholics did not stop here. A missal, worthy of the altar on which it was to have place, was given by the Comte de Pennalver. It was set in gold, richly enamelled, and cost 9,000 francs.

CHAPTER IX.

WE are in 1872, a date of mark in the annals of the devotion to Notre-Dame de la Salette. That year saw the first French National Pilgrimage so-called, the site on which the pilgrims gathered being the mountain of La Salette. The day fixed for the great assemblage was August 21st. It was then that was formed, under the auspices of the Augustinians of the Assumption, the French Pilgrimage Committee, which in the matter of organising pilgrimages has given from then till now such prolific results.

In this vigorous movement we see something of a new life-blood coursing through the veins of French Catholics ; it was as if the heart of Catholic France revived was asserting itself in a religious sense.

In this first National Pilgrimage we see a splendid start given to the great pilgrimage movement of the last thirty years. Pilgrimages were, in a religious sense, to shed a lustre on the closing decades of the

nineteenth century and brilliantly open the twentieth. During the years that have elapsed since the first National Pilgrimage, Lourdes and Paray-le-Monial have had their thousands upon thousands of pilgrims ; new shrines have arisen and old ones have been restored to their former splendour ; and, in short, the world has been brought face to face with the revival of a phase of mediæval Catholicism in all its freshness. Never have a statesman's words received a more complete contradiction from facts than those of M. Thiers when he said : "*Les pèlerinages ne sont plus dans nos mœurs.*"

Though this splendid revival of an old-world form of Catholic devotion belongs especially to the last thirty years, it cannot be said, properly speaking, that the great pilgrimage movement of the age dates from after the Franco-German war. It had really begun twenty-six years before on the mountain of La Salette.

By this time Mgr. Ginoulhiac had been translated to the archiepiscopal see of Lyons and had been succeeded in the see of Grenoble by Mgr. Paulinier, whom we see presiding at the great manifestation at La Salette, August 21st, 1872.

Preaching on that occasion to the assembled pilgrims in the open air and from the acclivity whence the Apparition had ascended, Mgr. Paulinier said : "The reality of the Apparition at La Salette is borne witness to by this church, the towers of which vie in majesty with the rocks

around, and by the monastery which has grown up beside it, and by the multitudes of people who come here from the north, south, east, and west." Three hundred priests, representing fifty-two dioceses of France, were around the Bishop as he spoke, and each had that morning celebrated the Holy Sacrifice on the mountain.

CHAPTER X.

IN tracing the history of the devotion, of which La Salette was the cradle, we have somewhat lost sight of those who were the cowherd children, Mélanie and Maximin.

On November 4th, 1874, a day bright and mild as in spring, and with sunshine bathing the *Planeau* of *Sous les baisses*, a solitary pilgrim made his way up the mountain. It was Maximin Giraud. He was going to take a last look at the spots engraven in his mind, in connection with the Apparition. The hand of death was upon him, though he was not to breathe his last until a few months later.

From a merely human point of view, his existence had been an unsatisfactory one from the time when the future Bishop of Orleans found him a restless, inquisitive lad, to the day when we see him toiling up the mountain, bent before his time, and with one foot in the grave. He had been a rolling stone that had gathered no moss. Educated at the charge of Mgr. Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, he had

studied for the priesthood, but without becoming a priest. He had been a medical student in Paris, but without becoming a doctor. At times in the great capital he had known what it was to want bread.

With all this, in his wanderings and vicissitudes, he had had the good fortune to meet with a worthy couple, who adopted him as their son. In 1865, he had joined the Pontifical Zouaves. In short, throughout his chequered career, opportunities and money had alike slipped through his fingers, leaving him poor, though neither mean nor ignoble. On the contrary, it may be said that he remained ingenuous and open to noble impulses to the last. The, humanly speaking, unsatisfactory side of his character has been made use of as an argument against the reality of the Apparition of La Salette. We have seen this argument ably refuted by Mgr. Ginoulhiac, Bishop of Grenoble. Theology and experience refute it also. Had the *voyant* turned out worthless, as well as reckless and unstable in human things, this in itself would not have militated against the value of his testimony as witness of the supernatural event at La Salette. But Maximin, as facts prove, was far from being worthless, while the weaker side of his nature remained admirably relieved by his unswerving attitude in connection with the Apparition. The Rev. Père Berthier, who for years had been his spiritual director, says in his book, *Les Merveilles de Notre-Dame de la*

Salette.—"Maximin was probably less deserving of blame than those who blamed him."

So on this November 4th, 1874, and when approaching his fortieth year, we see him dragging himself wearily up the mountain, in order to look once more on the sacred spot by Mount Gargas. The following morning he assisted at Mass there and communicated. Afterwards he drank at the spring, in the dried-up bed of which, twenty-eight years before, he had seen the glorious Apparition seated in drooping attitude, with her face in her hands. He then trod reverently the way of the Cross marked by fourteen elaborately carved stations, showing where the luminous Apparition had passed before ascending out of the children's sight for ever.

By this time there was a religious community on the spot known as the nuns of La Salette. Maximin was received and tended by these ladies, and afterwards asked by them to relate something concerning the Apparition. He did so, first within their convent and afterwards outside in presence of pilgrims. Those who listened say that as he spoke his face was as that of one transfigured.

After taking a long last look at the hillock, whence, as a little lad of ten, he had seen the heavenly visitant ascend and then disappear as in a globe of light, he turned to go down the mountain.

Maximin lingered on until the following spring. When he saw his end was near, he sent for a priest, and piously received the last Sacraments. He died

on March 1st, in the arms of his mother of adoption, Mme. Jourdain, and leaving a written profession of faith, which began as follows:—"I believe everything which the Holy Apostolic and Roman Church teaches." The profession continues:—"I firmly believe, even at the price of my blood (*même au prix de mon sang*), in the celebrated Apparition of the Holy Virgin, on the mountain of La Salette, September 19th, 1846, which Apparition I have defended by word of mouth, and by my pen, as well as by suffering. Let no one after my death say that he has heard me retract anything of what I have said concerning the great event of La Salette, for in so saying he would lie to the world and to himself."

Though Mélanie's existence up to that time had been calmer and less open to discussion than that of Maximin, she, too, had moved about considerably.

Early in her religious life we find her in England belonging to the Carmelite community of Darlington, and a few years later at Marseilles, and a little later still at Castellamare, near Naples.

By this time she was no longer a Carmelite nun, Pius IX. having released her from her vows in order that she might be freer to perform her mission in the world as witness of the Apparition of La Salette. From the time of that Apparition, her life seems to have been more or less clouded by the possession of her famous secret. At one time she was in the habit of effacing, whenever she could,

from maps and geographies, the word "Paris." When asked why she did so her reply was : "Because Paris itself will one day be effaced." To a friend questioning her on this subject, she said more than once : "Paris ! O unhappy Paris !" She early began to blame the Cabinet of Napoleon III. for the evils she saw about to befall France. She foresaw Napoleon capitulating before *carbonari* and freemasonry, and afterwards becoming, as she said, the "Pilate of the Papacy."

After the outbreak of the Franco-German war, writing to her mother from Castellamare, in a letter dated September 10th, and under her name in religion of *Marie de la Croix*, she said : "O Paris, home of vanity and pride, what is to prevent you from perishing unless our prayers arise in your behalf to the Heart of Jesus?" In another letter, dated November 11th, 1870, she wrote : "Paris has been guilty in rewarding a bad man who has written against the divinity of Jesus Christ. God is angry because of the multitude of its sins, and because He is almost unknown and forgotten in its midst.

"What can stop the war that is causing such calamity in France? France must own that this war comes purely from God. She must humble herself and beg pardon for her sins, and she must promise to serve God with heart and soul, and to observe His commandments without human respect. Oh, let us not cease praying and doing penance !"

In another letter, dated the 29th of the same month, Mélanie said :—"You say, dear mother, that I am fortunate in knowing what is going to happen to our dear France. Be thankful that you do not possess the same knowledge. For the last twenty years I have known that there would be this war. Twenty-two years ago I said that Napoleon was a knave and that he would ruin France. It was pretended that I was victim of an illusion, and France was said to be a strong nation. Where is France's strength now? You have perhaps heard of Garibaldi; know that he is a man of evil. He is doing what the devil would do had the devil a body. France has committed an additional crime in calling him to her aid. Let us pray, and pray, and pray. Let us not cease praying and asking for mercy." In a letter to someone else, dated January 20th, 1871, Mélanie wrote : "Be prepared for the defeat of Paris, and be prepared also for a calamity still greater, but which will not be of long duration." On June 23rd of the same year she wrote to a nun of the Congregation of La Providence : "Our poor country is indeed humbled, and if we do not return to God quickly and sincerely, what has been is nothing to what will be."

It is worth while to bear in mind that Mélanie, as she asserted in her youth and as she asserts now in her old age, saw with her mind's eye at the time of the Apparition, and while the celestial messenger

was speaking to her, a series of terrible scenes representing to her the different calamities that were to befall France and the world, the Franco-German war being one of these. There are authentic facts to prove that she possessed a complete foreknowledge of this war and of the Commune that was to follow long before these events happened.

We will glance at Mélanie again before these pages close.

CHAPTER XI.



THE consecration of the church of Notre-Dame de la Salette was fixed to take place August 20th, 1879. Leo XIII. on the occasion raised the building to the dignity of a Roman basilica, and authorised the crowning of the statue of Notre-Dame de la Salette.

The day before the one fixed for the ceremony people from all parts began gathering on the mountain. When the bishops reached Mount Gargas at nightfall they were met by the assembled pilgrims and made to pass through a triumphal arch. They included Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris ; Mgr. Fava, Bishop of Grenoble ; Mgr. Paulinier, by this time Archbishop of Besançon ; Mgr. Péchenet, Archbishop of Chambéry ; Mgr. Mermillod, Bishop of Geneva ; Mgr. Cotton, Bishop of Valence ; Mgr. Terris, Bishop of Fréjus ; Mgr. Robert, Bishop of Marseilles ; Mgr. Bonnet, Bishop of Viviers ; Mgr. Delaunay,

Bishop of Aire, and the Rev. Dom Antoine, Mitred Abbot of La Trappe and Chambarrana.

Religious rejoicing followed beneath the night sky. There was a sermon on the occasion, the mountain of *Planeau sous les Baisses* was illuminated, and there was a torchlight procession in the valley of the Sezia. All this was as a prelude to the celebration of the morrow.

When the morrow came upwards of 15,000 persons had assembled. The ceremony of consecration was performed by the Archbishop of Besançon. The Bishop of Fréjus, in an eloquent sermon, defended the principle of the supernatural against the materialistic attacks of the age. "Never," he said, "had the supernatural been attacked with so much violence or such insidious bad faith as in the case of the Apparition of La Salette."

The following day the crowning of the statue of Notre-Dame de la Salette took place, the ceremony being performed by the Archbishop of Paris, as Papal delegate. The Mass over, Cardinal Guibert, at the foot of the altar, knelt beside the statue, from which the veil was about to fall; while from the multitude around, including priests and people, arose as from one voice the *O gloriosa Domina*. The *Regina Cæli* followed. Then the veil fell and the crown took its place, and jubilant praise broke from the throng. The bells of the basilica pealing forth helped to swell the volume of sound

that floated over valley and mountain. At that hour, refrains in honour of the Immaculate echoed from hill to hill. Of the crown that played such an important part in this manifestation there is something to be said. It had been on view at the Paris Exhibition of 1857. It was an *ex voto* on the part of a lady, who gave it in gratitude for the cure of her only son. A choice collection of family jewels was set into this magnificent production of the goldsmith's art. The centre of each rose was a diamond—each petal was formed of an *aigue-marine*. In all, stem and leaf and flower produced a dazzling effect of fretted gold and gems.

It but remains for us to glance at the last twenty years in connection with the devotion radiating from the "holy mountain," as it is called. While other sites of pilgrimage, new and old, have gained or regained notoriety, La Salette has retained its pre-eminence. Pilgrims continue to go thither by thousands, and the stream of its cures, reputed to be supernatural, as of its spiritual favours, has no more dried up than has its ever-healing spring in the ravine of the Sezia.

We will cite as an instance one cure connected with these later times. It is that of Viotoire Berlioz, a woman seventy years of age, living at Domodieu, who had been a cripple for twenty years, walking with crutches, and whose case had been pronounced hopeless by medical

men. In August, 1897, this woman joined a body of pilgrims to La Salette from Morestel, and on the way thither had to be lifted in and out of railway carriages and other vehicles.

At La Salette, on the morning of August 19th, she was suddenly cured while assisting at the celebration of Mass. It was at the moment of communicating that the transformation was effected. She suddenly realized that a great change was taking place within her ; she felt at the same time an inclination to walk without crutches. Looking for a moment at these crutches, and then seizing them, she walked away with them in triumph, feeling, as she afterwards said, a strength in her legs that she had not known for twenty years.

Abbé Chavret, curé of the Curtin and director of the pilgrimage, writing a few days afterwards to the Superior of the Missionaries of La Salette, said : " I saw Victoire Berlioz yesterday ; she is in perfect health. So complete is her cure that she is hardly recognisable." The same priest, writing to the same Superior a few months later, says in a letter dated January 19th, 1878 : " Victoire Berlioz is as active as ever. She has never needed her crutches since. She can even do a little work in the fields in spite of her seventy-one years. I think you may state that the favour granted to this humble woman is among the most remarkable of those connected with the devotion to Notre-Dame de la Salette."

Not less remarkable than the physical cures are the conversions connected with La Salette, a truth which, half-a-century ago, so struck Dr. Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham, that this prelate, in his book on La Salette, did not hesitate to say that these conversions constituted one of the greatest religious marvels of our time. The same writer goes on to say : " Ordinary graces will not account for a course of conversions so extensive and so thorough as that which devotion to Our Lady of La Salette has been the means of effecting." In the same work we read : " The finger of God is here, and the Divine fruits, of which so great an abundance is visible, prove that a Divine seed has been abundantly sown on that holy mountain."

Writing nearly fifty years later on the same subject, the Rev. J. Berthier, in *Les Merveilles de Notre-Dame de la Salette*, says : " These conversions are, in themselves, more irrefragable proofs of Divine action than are all the marvellous cures that have ever been effected."

CHAPTER XII.



AND what of Mélanie? the reader may ask. The answer is, that the storms of the last thirty years have beaten upon her with considerable fury. Since 1870 she has lived mostly in Southern Italy. Emerging thence from time to time, she has more than once been driven back by stress of weather in the great world beyond, but always protected and defended by the Italian bishops within whose influence she had come and within whose jurisdiction she had lived. These bishops were Mgr. Petagna, Bishop of Castellamare di Stabia; and Mgr. Zola, Bishop of Lecce; and they have not hesitated to proclaim Mélanie to the world as pure, good, disinterested, and holy.

In 1879 the Bergère of La Salette published her secret in full, with the *imprimatur* of the Bishop of Lecce. A storm in certain French circles followed. Rome was appealed to to condemn; Rome would not condemn. The most it could be got to do in the matter was to say, in an unofficial letter, written by

Cardinal Catérini, Secretary to the Holy Office, to the Bishop of Troyes, that the secret in its published form should be kept as far as possible out of the hands of the public. "But let the clergy read it," added the writer; "it will do them good." It was precisely this portion of the secret relating to the clergy that had given such offence in France.

There is little to be said on this delicate subject; but to those who believe that the white robe of the Bride of Christ may be stained by the lives of certain bad priests, the Secret of La Salette is not without its meaning.

The secret, fraught with the burden of the universal cataclasm which it predicted, was defended by the Bishop of Lecce, together with the publication of the same to which his *imprimatur* was affixed. Mgr. Zola at the same time defended Mélanie, whose spiritual director he had been for some years, alluding to her as a virtuous and privileged soul, whom the hatred of miscreants and unbelievers sought to traduce. Mgr. Petagna, Bishop of Castellamare di Stabia, had spoken to a similar effect in 1872.

Fifteen years later Mélanie came prominently before the public in an action at law, in which she defended a small inheritance that had been left her by an aged and holy priest, Abbé Jean Ronjon, with the object of founding and perpetuating a religious order, the foundation of which she believed to belong to her mission in connection with La

Salette. This heritage consisted principally of a chapel at Châlon-sur-Saune. Her claim was opposed by two priests, Dessus and Ganthéon by name, the deceased Abbé's universal legatees.

Mélanie lost her case on purely civil grounds. Because she defended her claim Rome was again appealed to against her, and rumours arose, vague and false, like so many others that arise in France, that she had been excommunicated. Here again the holy and, by this time, aged Bishop of Lecce had to interfere. He asserted, even in the teeth of a French court of justice, that Mélanie had never been excommunicated, and proclaimed at the same time through another channel that her life was solitary, holy, and edifying.

Whence the reason of the persecution of this woman, poor and defenceless, whom thousands and thousands of Catholics the world over persist in looking upon as the faithful custodian of a Divine message? The answer may be found in the fact that the world has hated La Salette, and all that pertains to it, with that unrelenting hate which oftener than otherwise serves as a Divine sign-manual of the works of God.

Before leaving this part of our subject, we have endeavoured to get a last glimpse of her, who now nearly fifty years ago struck Bishop Ullathorne in his single interview with her as having, as he said, tasted of the Cross. We have questioned Canon Anibale di Francia concerning Mélanie, who not

long ago spent a year under the eye of this eminent ecclesiastic, assisting him in the work of the great orphanage he has founded at Messina. He says of her as follows:—"According to my humble opinion, Mélanie is led by the Holy Ghost, and is rich in supernatural gifts. I have observed in her profound humility, perfect resignation, a singular longing for suffering and penance, a complete detachment from human things, and an ardent love of Christ and His Mother." Canon di Francia adds that her life has been one of continual interior suffering. We call this glimpse of Mélanie in Messina a last one, and yet there is a still later one that the world has had of her. This was on September 18th and 19th, 1902, on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to La Salette. At that time the church and site of pilgrimage were in the hands of secular priests, the Missionaries of La Salette, who had been located on the spot for fifty years, and were now forced to leave through the present persecution of the religious orders in France.

Mélanie, emerging from her seclusion, spoke concerning the Apparition to the pilgrims assembled in the ravine of the Sezia. Abbé Bonnet, Superior of the present chaplains of La Salette, writing on this subject in the November number of the *Annales de Notre-Dame de la Salette* for 1902, says: "Never did more sincerity and candour speak from human eyes! If I had not already been a believer in the Apparition of La Salette, I have no hesitation in



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MÉLANIE OF LA SALETTE.
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH IN 1896.

saying that the extraordinary simplicity and sincerity expressed in Mélanie's eyes would have sufficed to convert me." Before this he had said : " The body alone has grown old, leaving the eyes young and limpid as at the time of the Apparition, and with something in them of the supernatural light with which they must have been then illumined."

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE leaving the subject of La Salette, we will look with the mind's eye at the site of the Apparition, enframed as it is in its magnificent panorama of hills. These hills are mountains, some of them with fantastic peaks reaching to the clouds, some eternally capped with snow. The highest is the Obiou, on the crest of which the snow never melts.

A good general view of the scene is to be had from the heights overlooking the *planeau* of *Mont sous les baisses*. Looking down from thence one sees the mountains smiling and verdant at their base. Their slopes are rich in pasture lands. In one direction alone the eye takes in as many as a dozen villages or hamlets forming the *commune* of La Salette. These, after heavy rains or a great thaw, are to be seen intersected by a multitude of crystal rills dancing in the sunlight. As the point of sight ascends, the scene grows in severity. Severer and severer it becomes, as the eye rises to meet the outlines of the hills, showing in rugged

grandeur against the sky. Snowy crests and rocky towers and pinnacles strike upwards, sometimes bathed in sunlight, but oftener wreathed in cloud.

Man cannot even copy such scenes adequately ; but he can do more : he can infuse language into inanimate stone. Of the church that has arisen by Mount Gargas it may be truly said, *Lapides clamabunt*. This temple, in the midst of the solemn Alpine solitude around, is as a poem, a prayer, a voice of praise in honour of the Blessed Virgin invoked as Notre-Dame de la Salette.

Beside the conventual buildings close by belonging to the missionaries and nuns of Notre-Dame de la Salette, there is a sort of pilgrims' hostelry, able to afford accommodation to nearly a thousand persons. All this, and the visitors who flock to the site throughout the summer months, constitute a little world of activity and religious life in what, less than sixty years ago, was but a beautiful wilderness. The spot seems to verify Isaiah's prophecy : "The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall flourish like the lily." And that other prophecy from the same inspired pen seems to find fulfilment here : "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free, for waters are broken out in the desert and streams in the wilderness."

The votive church crowning the scene is Roman-Byzantine in form and built of black marble quarried

out of Mount Gargas. Of the gifts accruing to it from the munificence of private Catholics, something has been already said. At the Jubilee celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Apparition its collection of treasures received the addition of a gold ciborium studded with more than four hundred diamonds and other gems. It possesses an embroidered carpet, valued at 8,000 francs, the gift and the work of the confraternity of the Children of Mary of Lyons.

An account of its *ex voto* offerings would fill a volume. One of these takes the form of a beautiful altar with *bas reliefs* representing the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. A Latin inscription upon it says that it was erected in 1856 by H. and M. T.—a grateful husband and wife. The grateful couple were no other than Henri and Marie-Thérèse, Comte and Comtesse de Chambord. High and low, rich and poor, here speak their gratitude in the language of marble and gold.

The great day on the mountain—the one on which thousands flock to it from all parts—is September 19th, the anniversary of the Apparition. The publication, *Les Annales de Notre-Dame de la Salette*, continues, as it has been doing for nearly fifty years, to carry the records of the sanctuary to all parts of the world. The Archconfraternity known as that of Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice de la Salette, after more than half-a-century's existence,

continues to gain fresh associates and to affiliate to itself fresh confraternities. It is computed that throughout the Catholic world there are as many as a thousand chapels and shrines in honour of Notre-Dame de la Salette.

The great message of La Salette seems to gain fresh significance from time. We may test it by its fruits. Among these are religious movements of a marked character at different times and in different places, having for object the sanctification of souls in general, and especially the purifying of France from what Pius IX. called her mortal sin, that is, profanation of the Sabbath. And now, at the beginning of another age, amid other fortresses of the supernatural, based on Apparitions in the nineteenth century, La Salette retains its place as a second Sinai with its message as of another decalogue.

PART IV.

Lourdes.

PART IV.

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Lourdes.
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CHAPTER I.

WHEN the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed at Rome in 1854 there was, with the exception of Italy, no country of the world so enthusiastic in its rejoicing as Catholic France. It is true France had been devoted to the doctrine since the days when Duns Scotus argued in its favour seven centuries before at the Sorbonne. Was an answer to this to be seen on Heaven's part when, four years after Rome had promulgated the great dogma, she of whose incomparable privilege it was question said at the Lourdes Grotto: "I am the Immaculate Conception"? This is heaven's secret. In any case, the affirmation by the celestial visitant at Massabiello remains Heaven's sign-manual of the Lourdes Apparitions. Before entering into the particulars of the Lourdes drama of heavenly plan and performance, we will say a few words about the little human figure in the foreground. We allude to that exquisite child-saint Bernadette Soubirous.

Bernadette was a sweet-faced, dark-eyed little girl of fourteen, very small for her age. She had but recently returned to her home, having for some time previously been in the service of her foster-parents at Bartrès as shepherdess.

It was a poor home she went back to, her father, a miller by calling, being hardly able to earn bread for his six children, of whom she was the eldest. She was, moreover, weakly, and had been so from her birth. The mother of the family, Louise Soubirous, was an honest, hard-working woman. We find Bernadette so backward in everything, that at fourteen she looked a mere child and hardly knew her letters.

At the time when she went back to her parents the whole family were living in a single room in a street known as the *Rue des Petits Fossés*, François Soubirous having had to give up his mill some time before through want of means. We have recently had an opportunity of seeing this room, visited as it is by pilgrims during the Lourdes season. It now forms part of a respectable dwelling-house and serves as a priest's kitchen. At the time of which we write, nearly half-a-century ago, bread was sometimes wanting within it, and firing also.

Firewood was in reality wanting there on February 4th, 1858, a date ever memorable in Lourdes annals. It was a Thursday. Accordingly, after the mid-day meal, Bernadette and her sister Marie and a little girl, Jeanne Abbadie, sallied

forth with the object of picking up sticks. Their wanderings led them to the spot known as the *Roches de Massabielle*. Rocks of Massabiello, what memories and what history cling around the name! Beside it, Lourdes with its mediæval past, its *Château fort*, and its position as key to the Pyrenees, becomes at once insignificant. But prior to the events with which we have to do, no one had given the spot a second thought.

The three little girls whose steps we are following found themselves by it as if by accident. Between them and the rocks there was a narrow canal supplied by the Gave, the water of which was very low just then, owing to repairs going on at a neighbouring mill. Marie Soubirous and Jeanne Abbadie took off their wooden shoes and prepared to walk across. They found the water cold, and said so when they were on the other side. Bernadette, delicate, subject to asthma, and moreover wearing stockings, thought twice before crossing. She even asked Jeanne Abbadie to come back and carry her over on her back. Having received a curt refusal to this request, she sat down preliminarily to baring her feet. The other two were already picking up sticks on the other side. The air was cold and the sky grey; but there was no wind. Busy with her feet and looking down, Bernadette suddenly heard the sound as of a strong wind. She thought at once that a storm was coming on, and looked in the direction of the

sound. Everything was still, including the trees on the banks of the Gave. She had begun busying herself with her feet as before, when she again heard the same sound. This time she was frightened and stood up. Then, looking straight before her and up at an opening in the rock having somewhat the form of a niche, she noticed that a trailing wild-rose bush growing out of it was in motion. Everything else was still. In another moment she saw the aperture illumined by a bright light. Then, in the midst of the light, she saw a human form. How describe this form? Literary and plastic art refuse to do so. Bernadette's simple language in telling what she saw is the best description. She says that the figure was that of a woman—a lady, to use her own words—young and more beautiful than anyone she had ever seen; that it was clad in white from head to foot and girded with a blue sash or scarf, the ends of which fell in front to the bottom of the dress. She tells us, too, that on each bare foot, which the folds of the dress just allowed to be seen, there was a yellow rose as of shining gold. A white veil falling over the shoulders to below the waist and a rosary, formed of white beads and a gold chain, hanging from the right arm, completed the portrait of the Lourdes Apparition.

Bernadette was at first frightened as well as fascinated and astonished. Alluding to what she saw, she says: "She looked at me and smiled as if

she had been my mother, and then signed to me to go nearer to her." The child instinctively fell on her knees and drew forth her rosary, and was about to begin saying the prayers attached to it, when she found she could not make the sign of the cross. Each time she attempted to do so her arm fell as powerless. It was not until the radiant figure in the rock, who now held her rosary in her hands, had made the sign of the cross, and one of large dimensions, that little Bernadette was able to do the same. As the latter recited the *Ave Maria* on each bead, the Apparition smiled approval and seemed to be listening while her own rosary beads glided through her fingers. But at each *Gloria Patri* she bent her head, and seemed to be saying in union with Bernadette the prayer in honour of the Trinity. At the end of the five decades she disappeared, the aureole in which she stood disappearing afterwards. The little kneeling form below was left alone with the realities of the grey work-a-day world around.

By this time the other two little girls had returned from wandering by the rocks. Seeing Bernadette kneeling with her rosary in her hands, they twitted her with being too pious, and told her to come over and join them. She accordingly, and this time effectually, proceeded to take off her shoes and stockings. She then waded through the water, but without feeling the coldness which she had so dreaded just before. When on the other side, she

began helping the others to do up their bundles of wood. This done, the three set off homeward.

On the way Bernadette was silent and musing. Before reaching home, however, she had given her companions some idea of what had taken place at the Grotto, cautioning them at the same time to keep the matter secret.

That evening, when saying her prayers, she burst into tears. The mother was then told what had happened. Attributing what she heard rather to the effect of imagination than to anything else, the good woman ended by forbidding Bernadette to go near the *Roches Massabielle* again; but the child longed to go there again, and inwardly nursed the wish to do so.

When Sunday came, the longing becoming more intense and, as it were, irresistible, she ended by getting her mother's permission to go there once more. Her sister Marie and Jeanne Abbadie were her companions as before. When the three had left the house they were quickly joined by others.

On reaching Massabiello, Bernadette became the centre figure of about a dozen little girls arrayed on each side of her and forming a semi-circle. One had come provided with a bottle of holy water, in case of a satanic element having to be contended with, and a formula had been agreed upon which Bernadette was to utter in the event of the Apparition's appearing.

The favoured child was on her knees, rosary in

hand, and looking up at the niche, then dark, but which had been illumined for her, as we know, on the previous Thursday. "She is there! She is there!" she joyfully exclaimed after a few moments.

The bottle of water was handed to her with a sign that she was to use its contents. She obeyed, throwing before her into the air a few drops, and saying the first part of the formula agreed upon: "If you are of God, come." The second part: "If you are of the devil, go"—died away even in her thoughts in presence of what she saw. The Apparition smiled approval, and seemed to come to the edge of the rock.

"She is pleased and smiling at us all," said Bernadette.

The other girls fell on their knees. They, too, began saying the Rosary. The *voyante* was soon wrapt from the world around. Her attitude bespoke adoration; her countenance became illumined by an expression of superhuman joy.

The girls on each side were deeply impressed by what they saw. Some began to weep. "Oh, if Bernadette should die!" said one. Afterwards they compared her, as she then appeared to them, to adoring angels seen on altars.

By this time others had collected on the spot. One was a woman, Nicolau by name, who went back to fetch her son from the neighbouring mill. The young man came on the scene with a somewhat

ironical expression of countenance. But when he saw the little kneeling figure looking up, not only did all irony vanish from his face, but a look of wonder and respect took its place. Thirty years afterwards, alluding to this moment to M. Estrade, author of the *Apparitions of Lourdes*, he said : " I had never been so impressed by anything in my life. It was of no use reasoning with myself. I felt that I was not worthy even to touch the child before me." He did touch her, however. Urged to do so, he took her by the arms and raised her gently to her feet. Then, with him on one side and his mother on the other, Bernadette was led to the mill of Savy close by.

The little girl was at first treated strictly by her parents concerning the visions at the Grotto. It was not that these thought their child capable of deceiving them ; but they believed her to be herself deceived. Moreover, they had a horror of publicity and of becoming a town talk.

On the following Wednesday Bernadette summoned up courage to ask her mother to let her go to the rock of Massabiello. The mother's reply was a smart refusal.

On this two visitors dropped in. One was Antoinette Peyret, a member of the Congregation of the Children of Mary of Lourdes, and the other a neighbour, Madame Millet. They pleaded with the mother for Bernadette ; they even offered to go with the little girl to the Grotto.

“You, too, wish to see my child a laughing-stock,” was Louise Soubirous’ reply.

Mme. Millet deprecated and remonstrated, and the two visitors were about to leave when the mother, in tears, gave way. “I am almost beside myself with this affair,” she said. “I will trust her with you, only see that no harm comes to her.”

The next morning, before it was light, Mme. Millet, Antoinette Peyret and Bernadette were on the way to Massabiello. The two women, while admitting the probability of the supernatural character of Bernadette’s experiences at the Grotto, were at the same time of opinion that the luminous figure in the rock was as likely to belong to the purgatorial realms as to Heaven. To satisfy their doubts on this subject, they requested Bernadette to ask the Apparition who she was, and to ask her, moreover, to commit her answer to writing. The two, with this object in view, and with, in the matter, the *naïvete* of children or the knowledge of modern spiritualists, according as the reader likes, had come provided with pen, ink, and paper.

Bernadette was the first on the spot by some minutes. When the other two arrived they found her on her knees, saying her Rosary and looking up at the rock. They, too, knelt down and began saying the Rosary.

A few moments afterwards Bernadette exclaimed, “She is coming ! There she is !” Her small frail body quivered with delight. She bent her fore-

head to the ground. As she looked up the other two looked up, following her gaze. All they could see was the wild rose bush growing out of the opening in the rock. Their only glimpse of Heaven was what they saw on Bernadette's face. Yet Bernadette that day gave no outward sign of ecstasy. As she continued saying the Rosary in concert with the others, her face at intervals became irradiated by smiles that no human words could describe.

At the end of the five decades, Antoinette Peyret, still possessed by the idea that the Apparition might be that of a departed spirit, approached Bernadette, and said : " Ask her if she has anything to say to us, and, if so, to write it down." With this she handed her the pen, ink, and paper.

The little girl, taking what was offered, drew a few paces nearer the rock. Knowing, rather than seeing, that the other two were following her, she, by a backward movement, signed to them to stay where they were. Then she was seen to stand on tiptoe and to hold up the writing material with both hands, and in all to try to approach as near as possible to the niche-like opening in the rock. Immediately afterwards her attitude told that she was listening to words proceeding from this same niche-like opening. Then, with a reverential movement of the body, which for grace could be likened to no human act of the kind, she went back to her former place. In going back she did not take her eyes

from the Apparition, whose glance, she noticed, seemed to rest tenderly on the younger of her two companions, Antoinette Peyret. "She is looking at you," she said to Antoinette, when describing what had just taken place. The knowledge of this smile remained with Antoinette Peyret to her latest hour.

Bernadette was then asked what the Apparition had said when presented with ink and paper. The child's reply was: "She smiled and said, 'What I have to say to you does not need to be written,' adding a moment afterwards, 'I wish you to come here for fifteen consecutive days.'"

"What did you say?" asked Bernadette's interrogators.

"I said that I would go."

"Why," asked Mme. Millet, "did you make a sign to us to go back when we were following you just now?"

"Because the Lady told me to do so," said Bernadette, who always called the Apparition the *Dame*.

"Ask her," continued Mme. Millet, "if she approves of our being here."

Bernadette raised her eyes interrogatively for a moment to the opening in the rock, and then said:

"Yes, she approves of your being here. She says that you and others may come. She wishes to see a great many people here."

Bernadette's attention was again turned wholly

to the celestial visitant in the rock, while her rosary beads glided through her fingers and a beauty, not of earth, was being reflected on her features.

When the Apparition had disappeared, together with its surrounding light, the child was questioned as to whether she had not listened to other communications from above.

“Yes,” she answered, half joyfully and half sadly; “she said: ‘I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next.’”

When Bernadette was taken back to her parents that morning, Madame Millet said to the mother: “You are fortunate in having such a child.”

The parents, as we have seen, were not at all sure that they were fortunate in the sense alluded to. While thoroughly believing in their child’s truthfulness, they had remained sceptical as to the reality of her visions. But now, after listening to her latest account, they felt their doubts considerably lessen, and were consequently afraid to take upon themselves the responsibility of refusing to allow her to go to the Grotto on the fifteen days as requested by the Apparition.

The next morning at dawn a party of three set out from the Soubirous’ house. These were Bernadette, her mother, and her mother’s sister, after whom the child had been named. Their movements having been watched, other persons, urged by curiosity, set out in the same direction.

All met at the *Roches Massabieille*. There Ber-

nadette knelt down at her usual place, and looking up at the opening in the rock made the sign of the cross and began saying the Rosary. Almost at once the smiles that began irradiating her face, and her forward-bent attitude, told that she was already wrapt from this nether world. Lookers-on understood that the Apparition was there.

Neither the mother nor the mother's sister was prepared for what they saw. The two women thrilled and trembled at the superhuman beauty of the child in ecstasy before them. Then the mother exclaimed: "O God, don't take her from me!"

The vision lasted about half an hour. When it was over and Bernadette had come back to herself, she went affectionately up to her mother and aunt, and was folded by turns in the arms of each.

When questioned on the way home concerning the Apparition, she replied that the "Lady" had said that she would have things to tell her later on.

The scene at the Grotto the following morning was, as far as Bernadette was concerned, much the same as on the preceding day, but the spectators were more numerous. In fact they were already to be counted by hundreds.

When questioned on her way home, the child said the Apparition had taught her word by word a prayer intended for herself alone.

On the following day, Sunday, thousands were before her at Massabiello, awaiting her arrival. Thus it was evident that the phenomena at the

Grotto were no secret to the people of Lourdes. More than this, the news of what went on there daily had already sped to Tarbes, Cauterets and other places. It was a case of *Vox populi vox Dei*. The people believed in the reality of the visions. They believed, moreover, what they had not yet been told ; for in the Apparition that met the child's ravished gaze, they were prepared to see no other than the Mother of God made man.

Freethinkers and anti-clericals stood aloof, of course. Even at this early stage of the Lourdes drama dissidents were divided into two camps. One camp saw in Bernadette a little impostor playing a part ; the other, pretending to speak in the name of science, saw in her a victim of hallucination and hysteria. The police authorities, scenting mischief, were already on her track, as we shall see, before this Sunday with which we have now to do is at an end.

When, at about half-past six in the morning, she arrived at Massabiello, a large crowd was awaiting her there, as has been said.

She was poorly but neatly clad, with the graceful *capulet* of the Pyrenean regions covering her head and shoulders. This *capulet* was white. She went to her usual place as if unconscious of the crowd. Then, kneeling down and taking out her rosary, she began saying it. Almost at once her face, looking up at the aperture in the rock, became as one transfigured. Its beauty and its joy were not

of earth. The eyes were fixed, the lips parted, and the whole countenance illumined. There was some one near Bernadette watching her closely. This was Dr. Dozous, one of the most prominent of the medical men of Lourdes. His object was to study the little girl from life, and thus be able to come to some conclusion respecting the phenomena being exhibited in her person. Until then he had been a open freethinker. His presence at the Grotto that morning was to make him a Christian and a Catholic ; and, moreover, one of the foremost apologists of the Lourdes Apparitions.

On that Sunday morning no detail concerning Bernadette was lost sight of by him. At a certain moment he ventured to take her arm and to feel her pulse. He found her circulation regular, healthy, and showing no nervous excitement.

Bernadette was then seen to move a little nearer the Grotto, retaining the while her kneeling posture. The reason of this was, as afterwards understood, that the Apparition had withdrawn farther into the opening of the rock, and that the *voyante*, in order to see her, had had to change her position.

Dr. Dozous, continuing to observe Bernadette closely, says : "Soon afterwards I noticed that her face, which until then had worn an expression of the most perfect serenity and joy, suddenly became sorrowful, while tears rolled down her cheeks."

Others noticed this also, and noticed moreover that the happy, joyous look quickly came back.

When the Apparition had disappeared and Bernadette had come to herself, Dr. Dozous questioned her as to what had just taken place. Her reply, containing a statement that was soon to become an oracle for the Catholic world, was : " When the ' Lady ' ceased looking at me, she looked above me and farther away. When I asked her why she was so sad, she said : ' Pray for sinners ! ' "

With this explanation it was easy for the crowd to understand the change of expression they had seen on the young girl's face.

All that day little else was talked of at Lourdes but what had taken place in the morning at the Grotto. Already Bernadette was almost an object of veneration. Had she not been protected by an invisible panoply of innocence and simplicity, her crystalline purity of character might have become tarnished.

Perhaps it was to keep this little human being as near perfection as possible that a storm of persecution broke upon her that very day.

The storm broke upon her as it broke upon the new form of devotion of which she was to be the witness and apostle. In the course of that Sunday morning she was summoned before the Imperial Procurator and questioned and cross-questioned. She was told that she was causing scandal at the rock of Massabiello, and requested to promise not to go there again. " I cannot promise you that, sir," was her reply. Later on in the day

when she was about to be confronted with the Police Commissary, some one said to her: "Bernadette, I think you are going to be put in prison."

"Oh, no," she replied, calm and smiling; "I am not afraid of that. I know that I have nothing to fear."

As before the Procurator, so before the Police Commissary, her attitude was remarkable for dignity and self-possession. We must not forget that she was a little rustic girl and timid by nature. Suddenly brought before the law and subjected to a course of brow-beating by one of the astutest law myrmidons of those parts, she not only retained her composure throughout, but astonished all by the simplicity and directness of her replies.

At the beginning of the interrogatory process, someone, unconcerned with what was going on, entered and took his seat as a spectator. This was M. Jean-Baptiste Estrade, then holding an official position at Lourdes, and later on to be intimately connected with the question of the Lourdes Apparition. At the time he was far from believing in Bernadette's visions.

M. Jacomet, the Police Commissary, after questioning and contradicting the child, tried to make her fall into pitfalls by contradicting herself. Not succeeding in this, he changed his tactics. Feigning anger, he suddenly exclaimed:

"Your story is a pure invention! I know who has put you up to this."

Bernadette raised her eyes in wonder and calmly replied: "I do not understand you, sir." At length, finding that neither by violence nor cunning could he bring pressure to bear upon her, he said:

"Will you promise me not to go to the Grotto again?"

"I cannot, sir," was the answer, "I have promised the 'Lady' to go."

The Commissary stood up, and pointing to the door, said:—

"If you do not promise me at once, I will have you put in prison."

Bernadette remained immovable as before. Here the door was partly opened and a man's head thrust in. It was that of François Soubirous, who had come to look after his daughter. The Commissary took advantage of the occasion. "You have just come in time," he said, addressing Soubirous. After insisting upon the enormity of Bernadette's case, he concluded by saying: "This farce must not go on; so I warn you that if you cannot keep your girl at home, I shall have to see that she is kept elsewhere." The man had been bold when it had simply been a question of looking after his child, but now that he saw Bernadette safe and sound before him, he was ready to promise all that was required.

Bernadette was again forbidden by her parents to go to the Grotto. What neither the Procurator nor the Commissary had been able to obtain, parental

authority obtained. The child promised to obey, or to do her best to do so.

She went sadly to school the next morning, and came sadly back to her midday meal.

On returning in the afternoon, at a spot not far from the school, she stopped suddenly short, prevented, as she said, from going farther, as by an invisible barrier. Some gendarmes, watching at a little distance, noticed the movement of her feet, which to them was inexplicable. She lifted her feet up, they said, as if to go forward, but without being able to do so.

According to her own account, prevented as by something unseen from going on to school, she was in the act of turning back to go home, when an interior voice reproached her gently for not keeping her promise of going to the Grotto. She turned her steps at once in the direction of Massabiello. Some gendarmes, as well as other persons followed her, so that on reaching the rock she was not alone. When there she knelt down, took out her rosary, and, with eyes fixed on the opening, began praying as usual. After a little time she arose, sad, as it seemed. Those around soon learnt, in reply to their enquiries, that no beauteous figure responsive to her gaze had appeared that day.

The parents, knowing their child to be truthful as well as obedient, accepted her statement as to the mysterious impulse that had made her turn her

steps in the direction of Massabiello when she should have been going to school. They accordingly withdrew their prohibition, and she was allowed to continue her visits to the Grotto as before.

We are on February 23rd, the day of the seventh Apparition. When Bernadette made her appearance at Massabiello at about six o'clock in the morning, a large crowd had already assembled there. She went straight to her usual place, and kneeling down and looking up, began to pray in silence. There was one near watching her very closely. This was no other than M. Estrade, who three days before had been a witness of her examination before the Police Commissary. He had then believed in her sincerity, but had remained as sceptical as before respecting her visions. We see him this morning in the quality of a curious looker-on. But a great change was about to come over him. His unbelief was to vanish, his belief was to become vital, he was to get a glimpse of Heaven in looking at Bernadette's face. We dwell the more readily on this sudden change in an intelligent man of the world, because M. Estrade was about to become a source of strength to the new devotion. He was to become later on an admirable historian of the Lourdes Apparitions. The bare remembrance of what took place that morning at the Grotto was able forty years later to wring from him the following heart-cry : " O Mother, as thou seest, my hair is white and I am near the grave. I dare

not think of my shortcomings, and I feel more than ever the need of thy help. When the supreme moment comes, and I have to appear before my Judge, do thou be my protectress, and remember that at the time of thy glorious Apparitions at the Lourdes Grotto thou sawest me on my knees."

To have an idea of what took place on the morning in question, we cannot do better than quote from M. Estrade's book : "*Les Apparitions de Lourdes.*" The author says : "As the rosary beads began gliding through Bernadette's fingers, her eyes were fixed on the rock with an enquiring glance. Then, as if a lightning flash had passed by her, she gave a start of admiration and seemed to be suddenly born unto new life. Her eyes became brilliant, seraphic smiles played about her mouth, and a nameless grace pervaded her whole person. We, the men, spontaneously took off our hats and bowed low, as did the humblest of the women. Like the rest assisting at this heavenly scene, we kept looking from Bernadette to the rock and from the rock to Bernadette. Without being able to see or hear anything of what she saw and heard, we understood that a conversation was going on between her and her mysterious visitant. When the first transports at the sight of the Apparition were over, she resumed the attitude of a listener. The different phases of the conversation were then successively depicted in her countenance and in her gestures. When the Apparition spoke she thrilled

with delight ; when it was her turn to speak and to entreat, her attitude became one of the deepest humility, and at times she seemed moved to tears."

These colloquies usually ended with the most reverential salutations on Bernadette's part. On this subject M. Estrade says : " I have mixed much in the world—too much perhaps—and I have seen women who were models of grace and distinguished bearing, but I must confess that I have never seen one who in this respect could be even faintly compared with Bernadette when in ecstasy."

At the end of about half-an-hour Bernadette moved forward on her knees, until she reached the spot beneath the wild rosebush growing out of the rock. When there she seemed to concentrate her efforts into a supreme act of adoration. Then, still on her knees, she went back to her former place. As light fades from a landscape, the glow of ecstasy faded from her face. Spectators saw it depart. And then, instead of the child that had thrilled them by her superhuman beauty of expression and attitude, they saw only a little simple, pleasant-faced peasant girl.

It was on the following morning, in the course of the ninth Apparition, that the miraculous spring was opened up. Among the various accounts of this episode we prefer that of M. Estrade as being that of an eye-witness. This gentleman was near enough to notice what he calls Bernadette's angelic attitude as she knelt at her usual place com-

muning with the Apparition. The rosary beads were gliding through her fingers. After a little while she stood up, and seemed for a moment in doubt as to what to do. Now she turned as if to go down towards the Gave. Then, stopping short, she turned back as if hearing herself called. She looked straight in the direction of the oval opening in the rock, and seemed to be listening to words coming to her from thence. Then, with her eyes fixed in the same direction, she seemed, by a movement of her head, to indicate that she understood.

This time, instead of going down towards the Gave, she went up towards the Grotto, keeping to the left. When near the top of the ascent, she stopped and again seemed in doubt. Then looking as if for guidance in the direction of the spot in the rock whence came to her her oracles, she stooped down and began digging a hole in the ground with her fingers.

Until then all had been dry around. Water came. It was very little at first, and muddy as it mixed with the earth. Bernadette drank of it, washed her face with it, and swallowed a bit of grass or herb growing near.

The crowd, accustomed as they were to what was ecstatic and heavenly in Bernadette's action, were at a loss how to interpret her present movements. Some thought her mad. With a face besmirched with the muddy water, but, as M. Estrade says, looking happier than ever, and with an exquisite

smile about her lips, she went back to her usual place. When her face had been wiped clean by some bystander, she resumed her former attitude of prayer, and again entered into celestial communication with the being who had just guided her childish hand in opening up a fresh source of mercy to mankind.

When all was over Bernadette was questioned as usual. Then came forth the simple explanation, giving to acts that had been taken for madness their true force and character.

"Why," asked one, "did you make a hole in the ground with your fingers?—and why did you drink dirty water?"

Replying simply and straightforwardly as always, she said:

"While I was praying, the 'Lady' told me to go and drink and wash myself at the spring (*fontaine*). I did not know where the spring was, and as I thought it did not matter (*que cela ne faisait rien*), I began going towards the Gave. The 'Lady' called me back and made a sign to me with her finger to go in front of the Grotto to the left. I did as she told me, but I saw no water. Not knowing where to find any, I began making a hole in the ground with my fingers, and some came."

"And you ate some grass. Why did you do so?" asked her interlocutor.

"The 'Lady' made me understand that I was to do so," was the reply.

It will be seen how exactly what Bernadette said corresponded with what she had done.

A few persons who remained at the Grotto noticed that water continued to trickle from the little hole made by Bernadette, and that though the drops were drunk in by the earth as fast as they came, yet they were forming a line of moisture running towards the Gave. Later on in the day, other people were there who knew nothing of what had taken place in the morning. They, too, noticed a newly-born spring which, by this time, formed a miniature rill. By the following morning the rill had increased in volume. People saw it and believed. Even those who the day before had cried out that Bernadette was mad, were ready to exclaim, "The finger of God is here!" But no one was near supposing that Bernadette's little fingers had opened up a modern Bethsaïda in which countless numbers were to wash and be healed.

This spring born but of yesterday, and already flowing as if it had been doing the same for centuries, was at once regarded as miraculous in its origin. It retained, for at least twenty years, this reputation among believers in the supernatural character of the Lourdes phenomena. But when men of science, including Abbé Richard, the well-known hydrologist, had well studied the subject, the conclusion come to was that the spring in question had existed in a latent state at the Grotto of Massabiello previous to the Apparition, and that heaven's visible

action in the matter had been only in the manner of opening it up.

So when the following morning the people found running water where the day before had been dry ground, their faith and religious enthusiasm became intensified.

Bernadette, on arriving on the scene at an early hour, but with already a vast crowd assembled there before her, went straight to the spot where, the previous day, she had dug with her fingers. When there she evinced no surprise at what she saw. Kneeling down, she drank of, and washed her face in, the water that twenty-four hours before had gently welled forth at her unconscious bidding.

She then went to her usual place, knelt down, took out her rosary and began looking up at the opening in the rock. Her face and attitude soon told that she was in presence of the Apparition. Presently she was seen to go up on her knees the ascent before her, kissing the ground as she went. The crowd learnt afterwards that in this she was obeying an order she had just received. The voice from the rock had said to her: "You must kiss the ground for sinners?" (*Il faut baiser la terre pour les pécheurs.*) She not only obeyed, but shed tears the while.

When at the top of the slope and just beneath the wild rosebush, she prostrated herself again, giving to the act the most perfect expression of humility and self-abasement possible. Then she rose, and

turning to the people made a sign to them with her hand to do as she had done. The multitude obeyed, every knee bending, and the lips of each being brought in contact with the sod.

At the Apparition of the following morning, Bernadette, on her knees, with a countenance illumined and with the crowd around her as usual, listened to the following words: "Go and tell the priests that a chapel must be built here." (*Allez dire aux prêtres qu'il faut bâtir une chapelle ici.*)

When the radiant figure in the rock had departed, and the niche had become dark once more to Bernadette, the little girl arose, as it seemed, somewhat pensive. She was thinking of the task before her, which was no other than that of going to see M. Péyamale, the curé of Lourdes. The words, "Go and tell the priests that a chapel must be built here," rang in her ears.

It here becomes necessary to allude to the action of the Lourdes clergy with respect to the Apparitions. That action had hitherto been one of extreme caution. As yet not a priest had been seen at the Grotto of Massabiello.

Why this abstention? may be asked. It was dictated by the wisdom and caution of the head priest, Abbé Péyamale, who from the first had given the clergy under him orders to observe a strictly neutral attitude concerning the manifestations at the Grotto. While admitting the possibility of the truth of the Apparitions, personally he was

more inclined to doubt than to believe. In all, his wise policy was to wait, and to prevent the clergy from being in any way mixed up with phenomena that were considerably agitating the people of Lourdes. In this attitude he was supported by his bishop, Mgr. Laurence, occupant of the See of Tarbes.

It is necessary that Abbé Péyramale's character should not be misunderstood at the outset. A little over fifty years of age, he was a model parish priest, with a father's heart for his parishioners, but he was practical-minded and thoroughly on his guard against anything like false mysticism. We now come to Bernadette's first interview with him.

She left the Grotto on the morning of the last Apparition intent only on one thought, that of putting into execution the order she had just received.

Personally she was unknown to the head pastor, and trembled at the bare thought of seeing him.

When she made her appearance on his premises for the first time, Abbé Péyramale was in his garden reading his Breviary. He looked up and she advanced timidly towards him.

While she was frail and diminutive, he was tall and massive. As she drew nearer to him he stopped reading and looked at her. He then asked her who she was and what she wanted.

"I am Bernadette Soubirous," was the reply. "Oh, it is you, is it?" said the priest, feigning

severity. "Strange stories are being told of you, my girl. Follow me." With this he led the way into the house.

"Now, tell me what it is you want," he said, when they were in the room in which he generally received his visitors.

Bernadette, a little confused, replied: "The 'Lady' at the Grotto told me to tell the priests that she wished to have a chapel there. That is why I have come."

"Who is this 'Lady' at the Grotto that you talk about?" asked the priest, pretending to be in ignorance.

"She is a beautiful lady," said Bernadette, "whom I see in the rock of Massabiello."

"But *who* is she?" persisted the priest. "Is she a person of Lourdes? Do you know her?"

"No, she is not of Lourdes; nor do I know her," was the reply.

"And you undertake to come on errands of this kind for a person whom you do not know!" exclaimed the *curé*.

"*Monsieur le curé*," said the child timidly, "the person who sends me to you is not like other persons."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Bernadette, "that she is beautiful as I think people must be in Heaven."

The *curé* shrugged his shoulders. The move-

ment was to hide something like emotion that he was beginning to feel.

“And you have never asked this person her name?” he continued.

“Oh, yes, I have,” said Bernadette; “and each time she bends her head towards me and smiles, but does not answer.”

“Is she dumb?” asked the priest.

“No, or else she could not talk to me every day as she does; she could not have told me to come to you.”

“Tell me how you first came to make her acquaintance,” said Abbé Péyramale.

Then, in a sweet, persuasive voice, Bernadette described the first Apparition.

When she had finished, the priest said: “Go on and tell me what took place the following days.”

He was then put in possession of the facts which the reader knows, and probably of some others besides. By this time both were sitting down, the priest looking fixedly at the little figure before him, and weighing what she said. He fathomed the pure, simple nature he had to deal with, and felt that Bernadette could not lie. Moreover, he understood that, considering her complete deficiency of all mental culture, it would have been impossible for her to speak as she had just done, and treat of the subjects she had just treated of, unless supernaturally helped.

It will be seen that he was already more than

half won to the cause of the Apparitions. But he was not ready to admit this, so resuming his former brusque manner, and with perhaps something of his former suspicion coming back, he said: "And you mean to say that this 'Lady' whom you see has told you to go and tell the priests that she wishes to have a chapel at Massabiello?"

"Yes, *Monsieur le curé*."

"Do you not see," he continued, "that this 'Lady' whom you say appears to you is making you a laughing-stock? What would you have said if any one of our Lourdes ladies had sent you on a similar errand? Would you have listened to her?"

"*Monsieur le curé*," replied Bernadette, "there is a great difference between the Lourdes ladies and the one I see."

"Indeed there is," said the priest. "What! a woman without a name, who comes from no one knows where, and takes up her quarters on a rock, appears to you worthy of attention! My child, I fear but one thing, and that is that you are the victim of an illusion."

Bernadette looked down and said nothing.

There was silence for a few moments, during which the *curé* walked briskly about. Then, coming and standing before Bernadette, he said: "Go and tell the 'Lady' that the *curé* of Lourdes is not in the habit of doing business with people whom he does not know, and that the first thing for her to

do is to say who she is. If she has a right to the chapel she asks for she will understand what I mean. If she does not understand it, tell her that she need not trouble herself to send further messages to me."

Bernadette looked at Abbé Péyramale with purity and serenity in her glance. Then she dropped him a little peasant's curtsy and went away.

M. Estrade was at the Grotto the following morning, Sunday, February 28th, and so great was the affluence that he had to take his place on the ledge of a rock. When Bernadette arrived, upwards of two thousand persons were already there.

At this Apparition, which was the twelfth, there was no sign for the outside world, no message for the Christian people at large. Those eager for a sign of the supernatural had to content themselves with what they saw on Bernadette's face. Meanwhile, the child, kneeling and looking up, reflected in her person a beauty and serenity not of earth.

M. Estrade looking down from his position had a full view of the marvellous scene, and he describes it in his book. He saw rough men and cultured men a prey to strong emotion. He saw a man of letters who had long forgotten how to pray trying to pray. And it was the sight of the little peasant girl in their midst kneeling and seeming, for the moment, an angel in human form, that was thus drawing all near to God.

Later on that same Sunday, a band of Lourdes quarrymen dug a miniature channel down the slope for the spring which Bernadette had opened up on the previous Thursday. They also dug a hole at the bottom for the water to run into, and it was in this rudimentary piscina, three or four feet in length, that some of the earliest of the Lourdes cures were effected.

The following day a priest, the first that had been seen there, was among the throng at the Grotto during the Apparition. He was a stranger to Lourdes, and had to leave almost at once, but what he saw that morning was to him a vision of Heaven, as he said at the end of his life.

The following day, Tuesday, March 2nd, Bernadette, in the course of the fourteenth Apparition, was the recipient of a message which she felt obliged to transmit to the curé of Lourdes. It was to the following effect :—"I wish people to come here in procession" (*Je veux qu'on vienne ici en procession.*) Accordingly, that same day, she went to Abbé Péyramale accompanied by one of her aunts.

"Well, what have you fresh to tell me?" asked the priest, when the three were together in the reception room. "Has the 'Lady' spoken?"

"Yes, *Monsieur le curé*," said Bernadette, "she has told me to tell you again that she wishes to have a chapel at Massabiello. Besides that she said : 'I wish people to come here in procession.'"

The man of God put on a sterner look. "Your story," he said, "but needed this to make it complete. Either you are telling me lies, or the 'Lady' you talk of is but the parody of Her whom she pretends to be."

After continuing in a manner calculated to frighten all tendency to imposture out of Bernadette, had there been any in her, Abbé Péyramale continued :

"It is time for me to get out of the imbroglio in which you and this 'Lady' of yours are trying to entangle me. Tell the 'Lady' from me that with the curé of Lourdes people must speak plainly. What are her credentials for the honours she asks? I am going to suggest a way by which she might gain credence for her message. You say that she appears at the Grotto with a wild rosebush beneath her feet. Ask her from me to make this rosebush put forth blossoms one of these days in presence of the assembled crowd. When you come and tell me that this has been done then I will believe. Moreover, I will go myself to Massabiello with you." The aunt and niece smiled at the idea of the thorn then leafless blossoming in March, and as the curé had nothing more to say to them, they curtsied respectfully and left.

We are on Thursday, March 4th, the day of the last of the fifteen visits requested of Bernadette by the Apparition. An immense crowd was expected, and measures had been taken to preserve order.

M. Jacomet, the Police Commissary, and others with him, were no nearer believing in the reality of the Apparitions than they had been ; but they were in presence of an already wide-spread popular movement which could not be put down by a single arbitrary act. The Lourdes population in general were in favour of the manifestations at the Grotto, and the townspeople who flocked there were at least equalled in numbers by those who came from surrounding parts, and even from a distance. This being so, opposing authorities for the moment could not show their teeth : they could only show their insignia of office in the name of law and order. This they did.

As the fourth day of March dawned, the roads leading from Pau and Bagnères were dark with people pouring into Lourdes. In the town all was astir ; people were about and busy ; soldiers lined the way through which Bernadette had to pass. It had even been thought necessary to bring from a distance brigades of mounted policemen in order to strengthen the local police force.

When little Bernadette left her poor home in the early grey of the morning, two gendarmes, with flashing swords, walked before her, thus clearing a way for her through the crowd. Although all eyes were upon her, she walked simply and unconcernedly, as if going to her parish church. On drawing near the Grotto she saw a little blind girl, about her own age, sitting down and weeping.

She was seen to go up to her and kiss her. Probably she was the only one present that morning that did not notice the sight presented by the rock and vale of Massabiello.

The meadow-land facing the rock and on the other side of the Gave was dark with spectators. So was the rock itself. Clusters of human beings were on the trees by the river's brink to the extent of making the branches sway. Even hillocks at a little distance were for the moment peopled by human groups. This is saying nothing of the dense mass of people in front of the Grotto and surrounding the spot where Bernadette was in the habit of kneeling. A vast murmur of human voices, resembling the roar of the ocean at a distance, rose from the multitude. It ceased as the *voyante* came in sight.

When the child had knelt down at her usual place, heads were uncovered, religious silence prevailed, and all present went on their knees. From the change in her attitude and from the joy depicted on her countenance, it was easy for spectators to see when, for her, the niche in the rock had become illumined.

There was a vague hope in the crowd that the Apparition would at length give forth some elucidating message—would, in fact, tell who the celestial visitant at the Grotto for the previous fortnight had been. For though no one doubted that this visitant was the Virgin whom Christian generations

have called blessed, yet no specific word to this effect had been uttered.

The people saw the expression of Bernadette's face change to one of sorrow, and they saw that she was shedding tears ; they feared that she was listening to farewell words. Afterwards, they saw this expression give place to one of joy ; but there was no message for them that day—no words for the Christian world at large.

At the end of an hour's ecstatic contemplation, Bernadette rose from her knees. When questioned, she said that the Apparition had smiled as usual on leaving her, but had not said that she would not come again.

There was something like a vague feeling of disappointment in the crowd. Many had believed that on this, the last of the fifteen days specified by the Apparition, there would have been some explanatory words ; some had even dared to hope that the wild rosebush would blossom, according to the request of the curé of Lourdes. There was a prevailing impression, however, as the crowd dispersed, that this was not the last of the Apparitions, and that something more explicit remained to be said.

During the following days, people flocked to Massabiello as already a devotional site, and the Grotto began to wear the aspect of a chapel.

Meanwhile, enemies of the supernatural were not resting on their oars. Voice and pen were being employed in decrying the Lourdes phenomena.

The spring that at Bernadette's touch had welled forth, at first drop by drop, and afterwards in a full stream, constituted the great stumbling block for opponents, these having to contend not only with the, humanly speaking, inexplicable discovery of the spring, but also with the fact that cures had already been effected by contact with its water. One of the earliest, if not the earliest, of these cures, was that of Louis Bourriette, whose right eye had been gravely injured by an accident some twenty years before. The little power of sight left in the deteriorated organ had diminished as years had gone by, and at the time of which we write, Louis Bourriette, looking with his right eye only, could not distinguish a man from a tree. Hearing of the newly-born spring at the Grotto, he said to his daughter : "Go and fetch me some of that water. The Holy Virgin can cure me if she will."

His wish being complied with, he at once began rubbing his injured eye with some of the water. In a moment he was heard to utter an exclamation. Words could not tell what he felt. He found that he could see with the eye that just before had been all but sightless. He saw at first as through a luminous haze. The haze cleared away, and then the sight became perfect. A day or two afterwards, meeting his medical man, Dr. Dozous, whom we have seen in the quality of a man of science at one of the Apparitions, he said to him : "My eye has recovered its power of sight."

"That is impossible," replied the doctor; "you are suffering from an organic lesion which renders your case incurable. What I prescribe for you is only with the object of relieving your suffering; it cannot restore your sight."

"It is not you who have cured me," said the man, speaking with emotion; "it is the Holy Virgin of the Grotto."

Dr. Dozous shrugged his shoulders. "That Bernadette has ecstatic visions that cannot be explained I do not deny," he said; "I have verified as much myself. But that water suddenly springing from a rock, through what agency no one knows, should possess the power of curing incurable diseases is impossible." So saying, he drew a note book from his pocket and scribbled a few words in pencil on one of the leaves. Then putting what he had written before the patient's right eye, and covering with his hand the man's other eye he said: "If you can read that I will believe that your sight is restored."

A little crowd had by this time gathered round. In a strong voice and without hesitation, Bourriette read: "Bourriette is suffering from an *amaurosis*, which is incurable."

The doctor's astonishment knew no bounds. He honestly owned himself beaten.

At the Commission of Enquiry, afterwards appointed by the Bishop of Tarbes to enquire into the early Lourdes cures, reputed to be miraculous,

the case of Louis Bourriette was declared to be unexplainable according to known laws.

Another case belonging to this quite early period is that of a dying child plunged in the piscina, held there for a quarter-of-an-hour, and then recovering. The child was two years old, had been sickly from birth, had never attempted to walk, and was wasting from slow consumption. On March 4th his parents, Jean and Croisine Ducouts, were bending over him expecting every breath to be his last. The mother had moved away not to see him die.

“He is dead !” said the father.

“He is not dead !” exclaimed the woman.

Then, as if possessed by a sudden idea, she ceased weeping. “He is not dead !” she said again ; “and the holy Virgin of the Grotto will cure him for me !”

So saying, she snatched the child from his cradle, wrapped him in her apron, and prepared to leave the house. Expostulations were useless, her only reply being : “Let me go and implore the Mother of God.” Hurrying through the streets with her half-naked child in her apron and praying as she went, she appeared a mad woman. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when she reached the Grotto. Some hundreds of persons were there at the time. She moved on her knees to the rude piscina, which had been dug by the quarrymen on the previous Sunday. When close to it she made

the sign of the cross on herself and child, and then plunged the infant up to the neck in the intensely cold water and held him there.

She was expostulated with ; she was even called an unnatural mother. To no purpose. To some one who spoke to her and touched her she said : " Let me alone. I will do what I can, and God and the Holy Virgin will do the rest."

At the end of a quarter-of-an-hour she withdrew the child from the water, wrapped him in her apron as before, and hurried from the spot.

When she reached home her husband, on seeing her unfold what he believed to be a little corpse, said : " You see he is dead."

" No, he is not dead ! " she replied.

She laid the child in his cradle, probably not daring to ascertain definitely whether he was dead or alive. After a few seconds, she exclaimed with joy : " He is breathing ! "

In truth, he was not only breathing but sleeping a sound, refreshing sleep, which was to last for some hours. When he awoke the next day he asked for food and had a bright face, and what, for a child who had never been able to use his legs, was more extraordinary, he wanted soon afterwards to walk. The mother, afraid, kept him in bed ; but there was great joy in the humble home, for a child that had been as dead was restored to life.

The following morning both parents went out to work, leaving the child asleep in his cradle. When

the mother returned, to her great surprise, she saw her little boy walking among the chairs. He ran towards her when he saw her. Both parents gave thanks on their knees, for their child had been more than brought back from the grave ; a strength that he had not possessed before had been suddenly given him.

M. Peyrus, the doctor who had attended the child, and Doctors Dozous and Vergez, did not hesitate to declare the cure the result of Divine intervention. This case was brought before the Commission of Inquiry, appointed soon afterwards.

Three weeks had elapsed since the last Apparition. The day of the Annunciation dawned bright and clear. More persons than usual had gone to the Grotto that morning, but little imagining what was in store for them.

Bernadette, by an intuitive sense that never failed her on these occasions, knew that she was about to see the Apparition. When she reached Massabiello at an early hour, a number of persons were assembled there before her. These she hardly noticed ; but what she did notice was that the aperture in the rock was already alight with its golden glow, and that within the aureole the Apparition was standing.

Alluding afterwards to her first impression on gazing at the illumined niche, she said ; “ She was there, calm and smiling, and looking down on the crowd as a fond mother looks at her children.”

The current of communication between the peasant girl on her knees and the Heavenly visitant began. When Bernadette, as she afterwards described it, had said all that was in her heart to say, she began saying her Rosary.

Meanwhile, spectators fed their faith and enthusiasm by gazing at her countenance, which was for the time ideally beautiful. People were hoping that a message was being conveyed : and a message was being conveyed—one that was to illumine with fresh radiance the dogma proclaimed by the Catholic Church four years before.

In order that the reader may well understand the scene that was going on, it may be well to forestall Bernadette in the explanation she afterwards gave to the crowd. It may be remembered that in the course of the previous Apparitions she had, more than once, asked the celestial visitant to say who she was. This had been at the instigation of others, because in her child's heart she had never doubted as to the personality of her who conversed with her from the rock. For answer she had never received other than a gracious movement of the head and a smile. On this day of the Annunciation, praying, rosary in hand, and looking up, she tells us that suddenly she felt impelled to again ask the Apparition to say who she was. Conquering her hesitation, she did so, and received the same reply, namely, a smile and a gracious movement of the head. She made the request a second time,

and received the same answer. Still irresistibly impelled, as she says, she entreated a third time, and with joined hands and with all the intensity of which she was able. The answer came. It must be given in the child's own words :

"I had asked a third time," says Bernadette ; "she seemed to become more serious and to wear a look of deeper humility. Then she joined her hands and raised them high against her breast. Then she cast her eyes upwards ; then unfolding her hands and letting them slowly fall, and bending towards me, she said in a voice that trembled a little : '*I am the Immaculate Conception.*'"

Bernadette's voice trembled also as she repeated the words. More than this, in repeating them, she imitated, though perhaps unconsciously, the attitude and gesture of the Apparition.

Those who heard fell on their knees. A moment or two afterwards their feelings found expression in uttering as with one voice : "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!" A wave of strong emotion passed over the crowd. Numbers kissed the rock whence had proceeded the words : "I am the Immaculate Conception!"

The news sped like lightning that the Apparition had at length proclaimed herself, and that it was indeed Mary the Immaculate who had appeared at the Lourdes Grotto.

Bernadette lost no time in letting Abbé Péyramale know the message she had received. M. Henri

Lasserre tells us in his book, *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, that on her way to the priest's house, she kept repeating to herself the words : " I am the Immaculate Conception," in order, as she said, not to forget them. It is worth mentioning that she did not in the least know what these words meant. Later on in the same day she went to see M. Estrade and his sister. The former in his book *Les Apparitions de Lourdes*, tells us that an angel's visit would not have been more welcome. She again described the scene of the morning, and tried with ineffable sweetness, even shedding tears the while, to convey to her hearers something of the impression that had been left on her own innocent mind. It was seeing as well as hearing Bernadette as she repeated the words, " I am the Immaculate Conception " that gave some idea of the vision of Heaven that had been vouchsafed her.

Later on, the sculptor Fabisch saw and heard her as she uttered the words and reproduced the look and attitude of the Apparition. " It was a revelation to me," he said ; " never shall I forget the child's look. My statue was composed at once. Each time," he continues, " I asked for the same pose, her countenance became illumined and transfigured by the same expression."

When the artist's work was done, and he had, as he thought, realized his ideal, Bernadette was confronted with the marble statue.

" It is beautiful ! " she exclaimed ; " but oh, not

like Her ! There is as much difference between the two as between day and night.”

Those who denied the supernatural character of the phenomena at Massabiello were exasperated at the turn things were taking. Those who had believed that the manifestation at the Grotto of March 4th was to be the last of the kind saw their calculations completely upset by the one on the day of the Annunciation.

Among the adverse lookers-on was Baron de Massy, Prefect of the department, living at Tarbes. This functionary was to be the chief wire-puller in the scheme of opposition brought to bear upon the Lourdes phenomena in those early days. As M. Boulard, Minister of Public Worship, was writing to him about this time on the subject of what was going on at Lourdes, he thought the moment had come for taking active steps. Accordingly, he called on Mgr. Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, with the object of getting the manifestations at Massabiello put a stop to. But the prelate refused to interfere, his policy being to watch and wait.

In the perplexity of the moment, and in presence of the sublime manifestation of the 25th, which had had the effect of drawing people to the Grotto in greater numbers than before, the only expedient the Prefect could think of was that of declaring Bernadette mad. His next step was to have her examined by a medical jury. The jury saw no sign

of aberration of intellect in the little girl. Enemies had to wait.

There was another Apparition on April 7th, remarkable for the now well-known phenomenon of the lighted candle.

Dr. Dozous gives us an account of what then took place. He at first saw Bernadette kneeling in rapt attitude with her rosary in her hands. Then he saw her begin her customary ascent on her knees to the spot beneath the wild rosebush. For some reason or another she stopped short in this ascent and brought the lighted taper in her right hand beneath the open fingers of her left one. The flame sped upward through the open fingers of her left hand, and with all the greater rapidity owing to a brisk wind blowing at the time. A good number of people saw what was going on, and Bernadette would certainly have been saved from what was considered imminent danger had not Dr. Dozous interfered.

The medical man would not allow her to be touched or spoken to. He took out his watch and noticed that she remained in the same attitude for a quarter of an hour with the flame passing through her fingers and seeming to leave them uninjured. At the end of about a quarter of an hour she continued her ascent up the rock. When all was over and she had come back to her place, and the inward light had faded from her face, the doctor asked to look at her left hand. He took the hand she held

out to him and examined it carefully. There was upon it no sign of the action of fire. He asked for the taper she had held, lighted it, and put the flame for a moment close to her fingers. He did the same thing more than once. Each time Bernadette quickly drew her hand away, saying, "You are burning me!"

Dr. Diday, of Lyons, one of the contradictors of the Lourdes miracles, alluding to this case of the lighted taper, and with the object of disproving its supernatural character, cites as an authority M. Hoffmann. The argument he borrows is to the effect that persons under the influence of hypnotic suggestion become insensible to pain. But, as Mgr. Ricard in his book *La Vraie Bernadette de Lourdes* remarks, and as Dr. Boissarie had remarked before him, a medical man has no right to confound a lesion with the pain caused by that lesion. He goes on to say in his work: "Bernadette in ecstasy might have lost all sense of pain, this being a phenomenon observable in nervous affections when the patient is under the influence of hypnotism, chloroform, cocaine, etc. Anesthesia may be produced under certain physical conditions and interpreted according to natural laws; but if the body of a person under these conditions be brought into contact with fire, the destruction of the tissue by burning must take place whether the patient feels it or not."

The advent of the month of May caused a still

greater affluence of people to the Grotto. About this time Baron de Massy paid a visit to Lourdes. Then began a system of petty tyranny and flagrant injustice, with which, in the name of the law, the new devotion was to be fought for the space of five months.

It is true we have seen little Bernadette in the beginning brought before M. Jacomet, the Police Commissary ; but we have also seen that there was no weapon in the law's arsenal which could be brought to bear against her. We have seen the Prefect trying to prove that she was mad ; but this, too, had failed. Apart from these two instances threatening personal liberty, the new movement of devotion, emanating from the Grotto and acting irresistibly on impetuous multitudes, had been allowed pretty much to have its own way. The action of the opposition had been principally confined to writing and reviling. Almost every anti-clerical organ in the country had taken the matter up.

As may be supposed, the Catholic Press had also kept its public informed of what was going on in the favoured little Pyrenean town. Meanwhile, the pool of Bethesda opened up by Bernadette continued to do its work, fresh cures effected by its water being constantly rumoured abroad.

Baron de Massy's visit to Lourdes took place early in May. In presence of the religious manifestations at Massabiello, the Prefect could, for the moment, think of no better expedient for quelling the

new devotional movement than that of ordering the Grotto to be stripped of the different emblems of piety that were already giving it the aspect of a little chapel. Such an order was given and carried out, much to the indignation of the greater part of the Lourdes population.

The adverse party seized upon a circumstance about this time which offered them an ostensibly good weapon. M. Latour, a chemist of Trie, in analyzing the water of the spring of the Grotto already regarded as miraculous, admitted that it might contain medicinal properties. Here then, said adversaries, may be the explanation of the cures effected in connection with the water. Baron de Massy remembered that medicinal springs came under state control, and lost no time in putting the Grotto under an interdict. He at once ordered it to be enclosed with palings. Thus no one was henceforth to set foot in the precincts to which thousands of people had had free access during the previous four months.

A certain number of Lourdes workmen, principally stone-cutters, took the matter up. Favoured by darkness, they went in a body at night and pulled the palings down. These were replaced the following day by order of the local authorities. The next night they were again pulled down. This performance was repeated three or four times. Party spirit ran high, angry feelings were rife, and the movement might have ended in bloodshed but for

the timely interference of a single man. This man was the curé of Lourdes. It was not that Abbé Péyramale did not sympathize with the men in their righteous indignation, being as he was completely won over to the cause of Bernadette and the Lourdes phenomena. Moreover, he would probably have been able to say then in his conscience, as Mgr. Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, said later on in words : "I believe in Bernadette as I do in my *Credo*;" but he was a man of peace and order, and he would not consent to members of his flock being in open rebellion against lawful authority. So, after reasoning with these headstrong parishioners of his, he preached to them from the pulpit.

The men listened and were moved. They loved their parish priest; so afterwards, outside the church, they went up to him and offered him their brawny hands to shake, and promised to submit. Thus the Grotto precincts remained enclosed with palings which shut out the public, while the fame of the Lourdes Apparition was spreading far beyond France.

On July 16th, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, there was another Apparition. On the afternoon of that day Bernadette had felt, as on previous occasions when she was about to see the Apparition, an impulse to go to the Grotto. Accordingly, thither she went accompanied by one of her aunts.

It was evening when they reached the spot.

Others were there before them. They took up their position on the farther bank of the Gave, facing the palings enclosing the Grotto. The oval aperture in the rock remained open to the view of all. Bernadette's eyes were fixed upon it at once. She knelt down, lifted her hands in prayer, and then almost immediately exclaimed: "She is there! She is smiling at us from over the barrier!"

Her upward glance and forward-bent attitude, and the expression of more than human joy that lit her face, told spectators what was going on. She was having her last glimpse of Heaven by the rock of Massabiello. This time there was no message for the Christian world; there were no words for Bernadette herself as on previous occasions. The Apparition only looked and smiled; but in that look and in that smile the small, frail girl drank in happiness too great for human words to express.

When the glorious Apparition had departed, the sun was sinking beyond the horizon, having just before suffused with roseate gold the rolling Gave, while its last pink flushes were still lingering on the mountain heights around. But Bernadette saw nothing of this. She rose from her knees, carrying with her the remembrance of a vision beside which the beauty of the material world was as darkness.

A bishop was among the visitors at Massabiello in July. This was Mgr. Thibaud, Bishop of Montpellier. The prelate was confronted with Bernadette and closely examined her. Conversing with

M. Estrade, he heard as follows : “ *Monseigneur*, I have seen celebrated actresses on the stage. These were but as grimacing and gesticulating statues beside Bernadette. These, by dint of great effort, succeeded in portraying human passions ; she, as an angel might have done, reflected in her person the virtues and beatitude of Heaven.” Mgr. Thibaud left Lourdes a firm believer in the Apparitions.

About that time the Bishop of Tarbes appointed a commission to inquire into the Lourdes phenomena. This body could not begin its work at once because of the restrictions on the Grotto.

Early in August the water of the spring became again the object of chemical analysis, the analyst this time being M. Filhol, a reputed chemist of Toulouse. The result was to distinctly affirm that the water in question contained no medicinal property whatever.

Great was the disappointment of the adverse party on hearing this, and great the joy of the advocates of the Lourdes miracles. Henceforth the Prefect had not the shadow of an excuse for excluding the public from the Grotto precincts on the ground that the spring therein might possibly come under state control. Nevertheless, obstinacy and prejudice continuing to prevail in Baron de Massy's mind, the site of the Apparitions continued to remain forbidden ground. But the *fiat* of one high in authority was about to scatter to the winds the orders of subalterns.

Napoleon III., going to Cauterets in the autumn of 1858, heard something of what was going on at Lourdes. Complaints were even made to him concerning the tyrannical measures in connection with the Grotto.

The Emperor saw clearly into the matter at once, and gave orders that the Grotto should be immediately thrown open to the public.

Shortly afterwards Prefect de Massy was transferred from Tarbes to Grenoble, and, about the same time, M. Jacomet, the Police Commissary of Lourdes, was sent to Arles.

Oppression by the civil power was to cease now, and the new devotion was to be at liberty to expand. Here we will look back:

We have seen this devotion in the beginning struggling under the grip of the law, believed in by the people, but practically disowned by the clergy, who, as we know, acted in the matter according to the advice they had received from their bishop.

The curé of Lourdes, sceptical at first, and soon afterwards a staunch believer, did not change his line of conduct at once. He, with the priests under him, continued to keep in the background concerning everything in connection with Massabiello.

This abstention on the part of the clergy was, historically speaking, to be one of the best arguments in favour of the Lourdes phenomena. Un-

protected and unaided, with a fierce light beating upon it from without, and a butt to the anti-clerical press throughout the country, the new devotion was, during the first eight months of its history, proving its right to live.

The period of probation over, with trammels removed and the Grotto thrown open, the Ecclesiastical Commission appointed by the Bishop of Tarbes began its work at once. It had at its head Dr. Vergez, of the medical faculty of Montpellier, a man already eminent in his profession.

Like Dr. Dozous in the same matter, Dr. Vergez went to the task as an impartial man of science, and like this same Dr. Dozous, he came from it a firm believer in the supernatural character of the Lourdes phenomena.

Among the numerous cures, regarded as miraculous in connection with the water of the Grotto, which had taken place in that year, 1858, thirty of the most salient were chosen for consideration. Of these, Dr. Vergez set aside all that left the slightest ground for explanation by natural laws. The Commission pushed its enquiries into the neighbouring dioceses of Bayonne and Auch, certain of its members going from town to town and from village to village with the object of obtaining information and weighing facts. When, a few months later, the result of the labours of the Commission was submitted to the Bishop of Tarbes, that prelate, though perfectly satisfied himself, forebore delivering a doctrinal

decision on the subject. He waited, thus allowing three years to pass. At the end of that time he appointed a second Commission to enquire into the same facts. The conclusions arrived at were the same as before. Face to face with these results, and in reference to the cures classed as miraculous, Dr. Vergez delivered himself thus :

“ In glancing at these cures, taken collectively, one is at once struck by the ease and spontaneity with which they spring from their producing cause. In them we seem to be in presence of an open violation and complete upsetting of therapeutic methods, of a declared contradiction of scientific precepts and forecasting. There is, acting behind these cures, a careful, though concealed arrangement and combination of circumstances, which shows them to be effected outside the operation of nature's laws. Such phenomena are beyond the comprehension of the human mind. How, in short, understand in these cases the simplicity of the means used compared with the greatness of the results obtained, the unity of the remedy applied compared with the diversity of the diseases to which it is applied, and the shortness of time required for the action of the curative agent in question, compared with the length of time required for the application of the treatments of art and science? How, in short, reconcile the often chronic nature of these diseases with the often instantaneous character of

their cure? Here we have certainly to deal with a contingent force superior to the forces of nature, and consequently extraneous to the water which this force makes use of in order to show its power."

CHAPTER II.

AT length the Bishop of Tarbes spoke. His doctrinal decision came forth : it was published in January, 1862, and was to constitute a rock on which, humanly speaking, the Lourdes devotion was to be henceforward built. In the first article of this important document we read as follows :

“ We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11th, 1858, and on succeeding days to the number of eighteen times in the Grotto of Massabiello, close to the town of Lourdes.”

In the second article we read to the following effect : “ In order to act in conformity with the wish expressed more than once by the Blessed Virgin in the course of the Apparitions, we propose to erect a chapel on the site of the Grotto, which site is now the property of the Bishop of Tarbes.” Then followed an appeal to the faithful of all classes and countries for help in erecting the chapel in question. The pastoral letter in which this doctrinal judgment was made known was ordered to be read

in the different churches and chapels of the diocese of Tarbes. Subscriptions began coming in at once from all parts.

In the meantime Bernadette had been growing up. She was now near nineteen years of age. The events that had so strongly influenced her life had left her outwardly much as others of her age and class. She remained simple and modest, with a face sweet and winning, and with ailing health as when a child. It was this, her state of health, that had led the Sisters of Charity of Nevers, with whom she had made her first communion, to offer her a home in their establishment.

Her parents in their poverty lived near. Though this poverty was at times extreme, neither they nor their favoured child could ever be induced to accept the slightest gratuity from any of the countless persons with whom Bernadette came constantly in contact. And this abnegation in the face of exceptionally necessitous circumstances continued unto the end.

We have said that outwardly Bernadette was much as others of her age ; in reality, she was far from being like others. Appearing to have but ordinary intelligence in ordinary matters, when called on to speak on the subject of the Apparitions she became a changed being. Then her manner of expressing herself and her replies were singularly apt and lucid. Though for eight years almost daily the object of cross-questioning and examination on the

part of the outside world, she was never known to contradict herself or show the slightest discrepancy in her statements. And she was as much mistress of the situation in dealing with consummate theologians as with ordinary persons. She may even be said to have more than once, by her replies, put a bishop in a corner. It was this, so to speak, dual personality of hers that added considerably to the interest she inspired. We may remember, by the way, that a similar double personality under similar circumstances had distinguished the two children of La Salette.

Doctors had had their eyes on Bernadette from the beginning, and those who had closely studied her, as Doctors Dozous and Vergez had done, had pronounced her mind to be free from the slightest morbid taint. By the adverse party she had been attacked on the score of hallucination and hypnotism, and was to be so until long after she was in her grave. But charges under this head had been conclusively rolled back from the onset, and were to be rolled back later on in the name of science by such foremost apologists of the Lourdes cause as Dr. Boissarie and Dr. de Saint Macloud.

If hallucination, as scientifically defined, can be but the remembrance of something perceived by the senses, Bernadette, to use the words of the Bishop of Tarbes in his pastoral letter pronouncing on the authenticity of the Apparitions, "saw what she had never seen before, and listened to that which

she had never heard before." If hypnotism means a nervous sleep under certain conditions, and the substitution of another's will in the place of that of the person hypnotised, Bernadette was far from answering to this definition. Sleep of no kind whatever had part in her experiences at the Grotto. During each of her ecstasies, while beholders saw a beauty not of earth reflected on her countenance, she remained perfect mistress of her senses and actions, and conscious, moreover, of what was going on around. No power of "suggestionism" was infusing into her mind that ideal type of beauty that she was gazing on, which, at each of the eighteen Apparitions, was distinct, clearly-cut, and the same, and of which creative genius in the past had given no prototype. Contradictors should ask whence this vision came, and with it the Lourdes message so full of meaning and big with consequences for the Christian world. Not from a disordered brain.

In taking this wide glance at Bernadette from a scientific point of view, we are losing sight of her at about nineteen years of age and having her home with the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. Up to this time she seems to have shewn no sign of a religious vocation. We are now about to have the first indication of what her ideas were in this direction.

About this time Mgr. Forcade, Bishop of Nevers, went to Lourdes. One of the first things he did there was to call on the Sisters of Nevers, with the

object of seeing Bernadette. His first view of the young girl was as she sat in a kitchen peeling carrots. Later on in the same day, at his own request, he was confronted with her in the parlour. He then questioned her concerning the Apparitions, and was astonished at the ease and lucidity of her replies. Afterwards he questioned her as to her future. The conversation under this head began as follows :—

“ And now, dear child, tell me what you think of doing with yourself.”

“ Nothing, *Monseigneur*,” was the reply, after a moment’s hesitation.

“ Why, everybody in this world must do something.”

“ I am with the Sisters,” was the timid rejoinder.

“ I know you are, but you cannot remain with them always.”

“ Why not, *Monseigneur*? I should like to do so?”

“ It is easy to talk like that, but it would be less easy to carry what you say into effect. It is not because you have been received here for a time, out of charity, that you can expect to remain here always.”

Bernadette, failing to see what there was to prevent her from remaining indefinitely where she was, the bishop continued : “ In order to be admitted into a community of nuns, it is necessary to be a nun, and you are not one.” “ It is

true," he added, "the Sisters of Nevers are allowed to have servants when they need them, but you are not even a servant here. You are, in truth, *nothing*, as you said just now."

Here Bernadette remained thoughtful and silent.

The prelate continued: "You are no longer a child, and perhaps you would like to marry and settle in life."

"Oh, no, indeed," was the quick reply.

"Then why do you not become a nun? Have you never thought of doing so?"

"It is impossible!" said Bernadette. "You know, *Monseigneur*, that I am poor and that I shall never have the money necessary for that."

"That obstacle, dear child, is one that might be easily got over." "When," continued Mgr. Forçade, "we come across a girl without money but having a real vocation, we do not hesitate to receive her without a dower."

"But," Bernadette ventured to say, "girls thus received are clever and educated, and that makes up for their having no money. As for me, not only have I no money, but also I am good for nothing."

"You underrate your abilities," said the bishop; "I saw with my own eyes this morning that you are good for something."

"For what, *Monseigneur*."

"For scraping carrots!"

Bernadette laughed. "That is not difficult," she said.

“No matter ; people are needed who can scrape carrots and who are willing to scrape them.”

After listening to further arguments tending to shew that menial offices are required in convents, she answered :

“Since that is so, *Monseigneur*, I will think over what you say ; but at present my mind is not made up.”

Mgr. Forçade ended by letting Bernadette know that, if in the future she should wish to embrace the religious life as a Sister of Charity of Nevers, she had only to write to him.

Bernadette said nothing of the subject of the conversation that had taken place between her and the Bishop ; but, at the end of a year, she sought the Superioress of the community, and informed her that she should like to enter the congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. Mgr. Forçade was communicated with, and his reply was that the convent of St. Gildard, the mother-house of the congregation, was open to receive Bernadette as a novice.

Bernadette fell ill again and again, and was thus unable to enter upon the religious life until three years later. It was in the summer of 1866 that she left Lourdes for ever, to become a spouse of Christ under the nun's veil. The day before her departure she went to take a last look at the Grotto of Massabiello. She was accompanied thither by two or three of the nuns. On reaching the spot she fell on



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BERNADETTE AT THE AGE OF 15.

the ground and wept. She kissed the ground, mumuring words of tenderness and sorrow. Those with her, moved by her poignant grief, tried more than once to urge her away. Each time she begged to be allowed to remain a little longer. At length, gentle force was used and she was led from the scene. Obeying, but turning back to take a last look of the rock she was never to see again, she seemed suddenly to put all weakness on one side. She at once became calm and resigned.

On the way home, one of the nuns expostulating with her on her too great sorrow, said :

“You know the Blessed Virgin will hear you wherever you are.”

“Yes,” said Bernadette ; “but the Grotto was my Heaven.”

The following morning she left Lourdes for the convent of St. Gildard. We shall glance at her later on as Sister Marie-Bernard.

In the meantime, the nucleus of modern Lourdes had been forming. The doctrinal decision of the Bishop of Tarbes had had an immense effect on the Catholic world. The affluence from all parts to the little Pyrenean town continued to increase.

The year 1864 saw the first public manifestation in honour of the Apparitions in which the Church took part. An imposing procession, composed of the people of Lourdes and of four hundred surpliced priests with the bishop at their head, made its way through the town to the Grotto of Massabiello, and

there, amid the religious rejoicings of the multitude, a statue of the Blessed Virgin was placed in the niche of the rock which Bernadette had seen illumined eighteen times as with a light not of earth. Thus was the first step taken in the realization of the words of the Lourdes message : " I wish people to come here in procession."

The chapel also asked for in this same Lourdes message was already growing to the proportions of a stately church. The workman to the fore in the plan of its erection was the stalwart priest who had at first been Bernadette's severe catechist, and who afterwards became her staunch friend and protector. We allude, of course, to Abbé Péyamale. It was with mingled feelings of pride and love that the curé of Lourdes watched the edifice rise in its tapering Gothic beauty. Shortly before, the crypt had been consecrated and opened to public worship.

By 1870 changes had taken place around. The waters of the Gave had been driven back, the spot was in charge of missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, and, in short, Massabiello was beginning to wear something of its aspect of to-day.

During the previous ten years the stream of cures, regarded as miraculous, had continued and widened. The cure of Henri Lasserre, historian of the Lourdes Apparitions, belongs to this period. The eye affection from which M. Lasserre was suffering was a *hyperenne*, or congestion of the

pupil. He had been under treatment by the two most eminent oculists of the day—Doctors Demarres and Giraud-Toulon—both of whom had discovered in his case a lesion of the retina. Notwithstanding all that science could do, his sight became worse, and blindness at no distant date was feared. A perfect and instantaneous cure of M. Lasserre's eyes was effected by a single application of Lourdes water, this application being made, not at Lourdes, but in Paris. The curious side of the case was that M. Lasserre had been induced by his Protestant friend, M. de Freycinet, to have recourse to the water of Massabiello.

With the beginning of the next ten years a fresh era was to commence at Lourdes. The extraordinary impulse which the pilgrimage movement in France received from events immediately after the Franco-German war was to find its fullest expression at Lourdes. The year 1873, which saw upwards of 3,000,000 pilgrims at different French shrines, saw 250,000 at Lourdes alone. It may be safely said that Europe had seen nothing similar to this religious movement since the time of the Crusades.

In this same remarkable year of 1873 the Augustinians of the Assumption who, the year before at La Salette, had been instrumental in forming the Pilgrimage Committee, launched into being the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. The following year saw a contingent of sick pilgrims forming

part of the National Pilgrimage. These pilgrims being for the most part poor, the means of thus conveying them to the Grotto of Massabiello was the result of charitable contributions. The sick contingent of the beginning has, with time, grown to something like a thousand destitute, suffering, and sometimes dying persons, who yearly form part of the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. In those early days the national pilgrims needed but two trains to take them to their destination ; now, thirty years later, they need eighteen.

In July, 1876, the votive church in honour of Notre-Dame de Lourdes was consecrated by Mgr. Guibert, Archbishop of Paris, the Pope having raised the building to the dignity of a Roman basilica. Six archbishops and twenty-one bishops took part in the magnificent ceremony.

The year 1877 saw the death of the indefatigable curé of Lourdes, known at that time as Mgr. Péyamale, the Pope having conferred on him the title of Apostolic Protonotary.

Another death was shortly to occur, that of a sweet child-like being in nun's garb whom we have known as Bernadette Soubirous. We will glance at Sister Marie-Bernard for a moment before she is taken from this world. Retaining to the last her joyous elasticity of spirit, and learning to walk ever more manfully in the way of the cross, she had become an almost perfect religious. This does not mean that her nature had acquired the serenity and

self-mastery of the perfect. At times pain wrung from her words of impatience, of which she quickly repented. The Divine words heard by St. Paul are applicable in her case: "Strength is made perfect in weakness."

As Bernadette neared her last home, her large lustrous eyes became larger and more lustrous. The day that was to see her leave this earth saw her on her bed with her arms extended in the form of a cross. This was the Wednesday of Easter week, April 16th, 1878; and, as if to render her end still more like that of Him whom one of the most luminous-minded of modern priests* calls the "eternal Lover of our souls," she died at three o'clock in the afternoon, while almost her last words were: "I thirst!" Quite her last words were: "Holy Mary, Mother of God." These died on her lips as her spirit fled. She was buried in the convent grounds, while nature was bursting into life around, and Easter alleluias were lingering in the air.

We have said but little of the cures that had been drawing the attention of the Catholic world upon Lourdes from the time of the Apparitions. These, uninterrupted in their course, were already a topic of vital interest in the scientific world. The ten years following the Franco-German war formed a period rich in cases regarded as supernatural, for with the increased affluence of people to the Grotto, the number of cures increased in proportion. We

* Isaac Hecker.

will single out three typical instances belonging to this period.

The case of Abbé Victor de Musy is one. We will first glance at M. de Musy in his ancestral home as son of the Comte de Musy of Digoine, near Autun. He was a young man of fine presence and with apparently a splendid future lying before him, but when he was about seventeen years of age, he suddenly began to shew signs of failing health. Soon afterwards he said to his parents: "God calls me: I wish to be a priest."

In 1851 he entered the College of Annecy. There the disease that was afterwards to lay him low shewed its first symptoms in an affection of the spinal marrow. Paralysis of the larynx followed, and he was obliged to leave the seminary.

Later on, having recovered his voice, he entered the Paris seminary of Saint-Sulpice. There, hardly had his first-rate abilities time to assert themselves, before he almost completely lost the use of his sight.

In consideration of his eminent fitness for the priesthood, this state of more than semi-blindness was not allowed to be an obstacle to his vocation. He was ordained priest, with permission to say the same Mass daily—one that he knew by heart—and to recite the Rosary daily in the place of the canonical office incumbent on priests.

Thus, humanly speaking, feebly equipped for his glorious ministry, he returned to his father's château

of Digoine, and began exercising his priestly functions at once. At the end of two years, paralysis resumed its work and reduced the newly-made priest to a state of complete bodily incapacity. He was then but thirty-four years of age. Doctors looking upon his case as hopeless, he became perfectly resigned to his state. He was in the habit of saying: "I wished to be a priest; God wished me to be a sufferer. Blessed be His holy will."

We find him at Lourdes in August, 1873, not with the ostensible object of recovering his health, but urged thither by friends. He was accompanied by a young priest, M. Antoine, who was his constant companion.

When there, hope in his possible recovery began to assert itself within him, strengthened as he was in this new-born feeling by Abbé Peyramale and others. A novena of prayer, in which many joined, was begun for him. The Feast of the Assumption drew near. It was hoped that on that day Heaven would speak and that the paralysed man would rise and walk.

The feast day dawned. At an early hour Abbé de Musy was in the crypt of the basilica, reclining in his invalid's chair. The Holy Sacrifice was being offered for him by his faithful friend, the young Abbé Antoine. A few persons only were present, the throng being assembled in the upper church. At the moment of the communion the Sacred Host was brought to the sufferer, who remained in

thanksgiving while a second and a third Mass followed.

The celebrant of the third was a priest from Paris, Abbé Dominique Sire, who had formerly known Abbé de Musy at Saint-Sulpice, but who was totally ignorant that the latter was then at Lourdes. He was offering up his Mass for the person the Blessed Virgin might most wish to succour at the moment, and it was being served by Abbé Antoine, secretly disappointed that the looked-for cure in the person of his friend had not taken place.

Meanwhile, he who was the object of so much solicitude was far removed from the preoccupations of self and of this lower world. Peace and joy were inundating his soul: he was more than content with his infirmity. He was aroused to the sacred reality going on by the words *Sursum corda*.

What then took place, words are weak to describe. It was the raising of the paralysed man to soundness of health in an instant; it was the sudden restoring of sight to the blind. Abbé de Musy knew and felt that he could both walk and see. He did not use his newly-gained power at once. Did he for a moment doubt or fear? Probably so, from his own account. Then, as sometimes happens in cures of this kind, it seemed to him as if an invisible force outside himself were gently urging him to rise. He obeyed, and rose. He then fell on his knees. At the altar it was the moment of the elevation,

and it was as if Heaven had willed that the first act of the renovated man should be one of adoration.

It was not until the Mass was over that Abbé Antoine caught sight of Abbé de Musy on his knees with his face in his hands. Not knowing what to hope or to believe, he drew near ready to offer help. When he saw the kneeling priest about to rise, he pushed the invalid's chair forward.

The other, by a movement of the hand, indicated that he did not require the chair, and said in a calm voice : " The Blessed Virgin has just cured me."

Then, walking with a firm step, he proceeded to leave the crypt. Abbé Antoine, dumb from astonishment and suppressed emotion, followed with the invalid's chair.

A carriage was awaiting them outside. When the coachman saw the young priest with the chair, but without the chair's ordinary occupant, he too was astonished. At that moment Abbé de Musy, handsome, erect, and of commanding stature, came up.

"The Blessed Virgin has cured me," he said. "I do not need the carriage ; we will go on foot to the Grotto."

Shortly afterwards Abbé de Musy was to be seen in the Grotto addressing the crowd without.

"Yes, dear brethren," he said, "I am he whom you have seen here of late paralysed and almost blind ! For the last twenty years I have been

unable to read ! For eleven years I have been unable to walk ! ”

The strains of the *Magnificat* burst from the throng.

“ Walk ! walk ! ” cried voices in unison, and Abbé de Musy walked. “ Read ! read ! ” cried others ; and books of the smallest type were handed him. He read as if his power of sight had never been in the least disturbed.

There was no transition period in this cure. The muscles needed no time wherein to regain their wasted strength. Abbé de Musy at once recovered the full powers of vigorous manhood. The following year he was appointed to the cure of Chagny, in the diocese of Autun, a post to which he long did honour.

This cure is recorded on a large marble slab at the entrance to the Grotto.

A cure took place in 1875 which was to have a marked effect in spreading devotion to Notre-Dame de Lourdes throughout the whole of Belgium. It was that of Pierre Rudder, a working man of Jabbeke, near Bruges. In 1867 this man had had his leg broken by the falling of a tree. The fracture took place beneath the knee. M. Affenaer, a doctor of Oudenbourg, and two medical men of Bruges, Doctors Jacques and Verriert, tried successively to set the broken limb, but without success.

Recourse was had to three surgeons from other parts, but with like result. The fractured portions

could not be brought together by a distance of three centimètres. A wound intervened, within which the extremities of the broken bone could be distinctly seen.

Rudder had to keep his bed for a year, enduring the while great suffering. At the end of that time he managed to get about on crutches, but his state continued radically the same, the great suppurating wound remaining, as well as the distance of three centimètres between the fractured parts.

At the end of eight years, that is, in 1875, he expressed a wish to go to the shrine of Notre-Dame de Lourdes at Oostacker. It is well to mention here that he was a man of strong religious convictions and that he had an especial devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

At Oostacker there was a Grotto in imitation of the one at Lourdes and much frequented by people of the country round. With great difficulty Rudder made his way to the spot, accompanied by his wife.

One of the first things he did on arriving there was to sit on a bench in front of the Grotto, and consequently in front of the statue of Notre-Dame de Lourdes. Then, looking up, and invoking her whom the statue represented, he prayed with an intensity of earnestness of which the strongest faith only is capable. He asked for his cure.

After a little while a strange commotion took place within him. Then, forgetting his crutches, he moved forward among the benches until immediately in front

of the statue. Then, kneeling down, he remained a few seconds absorbed in prayer. "Thanks ! thanks !" (" *Merci ! Merci !*") broke from him at last. It was a heart utterance. He then went back to fetch his crutches, which he placed in the Grotto.

Fellow-pilgrims marvelled to see the man thus walk unaided ; some wept ; his wife was well-nigh fainting.

Rudder was taken at once to the neighbouring Château of Courtebourne, and there medically examined. The broken leg was found to be perfectly set, and the suppurating wound had disappeared, there remaining but a faint blue line to tell where the fracture had been.

This case is one of the most remarkable recorded in the Lourdes annals. Dr. Affenaer, who had attended Rudder from the first, on examining the limb as it then was, said, while almost overcome by emotion :

"You are radically cured. Your leg is as perfect as that of a child just born. No human remedy was of any avail ; but what doctors could not do, the Blessed Virgin has done."

Twenty-two doctors from different parts went to examine Pierre Rudder's leg. This was not all. The man's body, after death, was to bear witness to the act of Divine intervention of which he had been the object. He died in 1898, at the age of seventy-three. The year following the body was exhumed, the legs were cut off at the knees, and the bones

extracted from the amputated parts. These bones were then subjected to a strict scientific investigation, the fractured one revealing to the naked eye the perfect and instantaneous joining of its broken parts, which had taken place twenty-three years before. The *Revue des Questions Scientifiques* took the matter up and gave excellent photographic reproductions of the amputated leg-bone, the line of the fracture being distinctly visible in each. The following year, 1900, the Committee of the National Belgian Pilgrimage to Lourdes sent thither a fac-simile of this same leg-bone cast in copper. The curious and most convincing *ex voto* has its place in the *Bureau des Constatations*.

The other of the three typical cases we have chosen as illustrations of the period between 1870 and 1880 is that of François Macary, a cabinet-maker of Latour, in the department of the Tarn. It belongs to an earlier date than the two others, that is, 1871.

This man, François Macary, was a freethinker, but blessed with a Christian wife, who had been silently praying for him for thirty years. During this time Macary had been a sufferer from varicose veins. The disease had become worse with time : the legs were bleeding and ulcerated, with great knotty protuberances here and there, and with veins showing like ropes. A good part of his time the man had to lie by, and the maimed limb had always to be kept bandaged as well as encased in leather

stockings. In short, it was one of the worst cases of varicose veins possible.

He who was thus afflicted, being more accustomed to swear than to pray, did not always bear his sufferings with patience. In the July of 1871 he had been on his back for six weeks suffering intensely, when a book, causing much sensation at the time, made its way into his hands. This book was the *Histoire de Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, by Henri Lasserre. As he read, new horizons opened before him, and dried-up springs of faith welled up within him. The result was that he insisted upon having some of the water from the Lourdes Grotto. A bottle of this water was brought him shortly afterwards by a priest of the town, returning from Lourdes. He went with it at once to his room. There, and perhaps for the first time in his life, he fell on his knees before a crucifix. He began saying the only prayer he could remember, which was no other than the "Hail Mary." He then stripped his swollen and bleeding legs of their stockings and bindings, and began applying to them, as best he could, the Lourdes water, praying the while with an intensity with which words could not keep pace. Tempestuous in his belief as he had been in his unbelief, he each moment expressed more loudly the conviction that he was about to see the end of his sufferings.

In this frame of mind he went to bed. Contrary to his habit, he fell asleep at once, and awoke about

midnight free from pain. Putting his hands to his legs he found that the rope-like veins had disappeared. He called out to his wife in an adjoining room, "Wife, I am cured!"

For answer he was told to go to sleep again.

He obeyed by falling into a sound, refreshing slumber such as he had not known for many years.

His first act on awaking was to look at his legs. Alone, and with daylight pouring on the scene, he was able to examine what night, or rather, as he believed, what the beneficent water of Massabiello had effected in his behalf. The fact was before him in unmistakable clearness. To use his own words, varicose veins and ulcers had disappeared, and the skin was as smooth as that of his two hands. His first act was one of gratitude. "O, God!" he exclaimed, raising his hands to heaven, "O, Holy Virgin!" He then called his wife. "Virginie! Virginie!" he cried out. The old woman, who had so long hoped and prayed, came, and when she saw what had taken place could only express her emotion by tears. Kneeling by the bed, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

Three medical men of the town, Doctors Ségur, Rossignol and Bernet, who through a course of years had attended Macary at intervals, testified to the completeness and suddenness of the cure which he had just undergone.

Dr. Ségur in his report said: "This spontaneous

cure strikes me as all the more remarkable since medical science records none of a like nature."

Dr. Bernet, of the medical faculty of Paris, says : "Science is unable to explain this fact, all medical authorities agreeing that varicose veins left to themselves are incurable ; that they cannot be cured by palliative measures ; that still less can they be the object of spontaneous cures ; and that it is in their nature to increase in gravity as time goes on." For these reasons he concludes that the cure of François Marcary is a supernatural one.

CHAPTER III.



THE gaining at Lourdes of speech and hearing by persons born deaf and dumb has not been exemplified by such exceptional cases but that a fair list of such might be made out.

One is that of Mdlle. Aurélia Bruneau, who, according to the testimony of Dr. de la Mardelle, a medical man who had known her from infancy, had been deaf and dumb from her birth. Born in 1853 at Chabris, in the department of the Indre, she had been educated at an institution for the deaf and dumb at Déols, near Chatouroux. At the age of 20, never having spoken or heard, her case was looked upon as hopeless. Such was her condition when, at Lourdes, October 11th, 1872, she suddenly acquired the power of hearing, having undergone as sole treatment the dropping of a little of the water of the Grotto into her ears on each of the previous days. Being able to hear, she began at once to speak. Dr. de la Mardelle, in testifying to her cure, said : “ We are obliged to conclude that

this cure bears the character of a supernatural one."

The Belgian Pilgrimage to Lourdes of 1888 included among its members three persons, Désiré and Clémentine Mélain (brother and sister) and Joséphine Denol, who, according to the medical certificates of Doctors Trusset and Vanpee, were deaf and dumb, and had been so from their birth. At Lourdes, each acquired the power of hearing and of speech.

In his *Histoire Médicale de Lourdes*, Dr. Boissarie describes this case, or rather these three cases combined, as scientifically inexplicable.

Less important, perhaps, in the interests of science, but not less interesting in itself, is the case of Mademoiselle Pourchet, who, struck dumb at the age of seven, remained so for forty-five years, and then suddenly recovered her power of speech while praying at the Lourdes Grotto. This was on September 30th, 1883. During the previous forty-five years she had not been able to utter a syllable. On the first sound that escaped her lips, her emotion was so poignant that lookers-on supposed her to be ill. "No, no," she replied, when questioned. These were her first articulate words. Almost immediately afterwards she was heard saying the "Hail Mary" aloud.

To meet the growing exigencies of the sick at Lourdes, the Hospital of *Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs* was begun there in 1879. About the same time the piscinæ were increased, and shortly after-

wards the two associations of *brancardiers* came into existence; that of *Notre-Dame de Salut* having to do especially with the National Pilgrimage, and that of *Notre-Dame de Lourdes* having its ramifications throughout the different dioceses of France.

Who more chivalrous than these modern knights-hospitalers, bringing to their task a refinement of charity with which probably the chivalry of the Middle Ages was unacquainted? They are recruited from all ranks, but principally from the upper and middle classes. With the *bretelles* of the *brancardier* over their shoulders, they are at once the servants of the poorest, bearing from place to place patients on their pallets, and displaying a wealth of tenderness and pity, generally considered the exclusive apanage of women.

Men, however, are far from deserving all the praise in this splendid expression of Catholic charity at Lourdes. Besides its *brancardiers*, Lourdes has its two associations of *dames hospitalières*—that of *Notre-Dame de Salut* and that of *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*.

The ladies composing these two bodies constitute nothing less than a phalanx of Sisters of Charity in lay garb. Many of them are brilliant women of the world; numbers are nobly born; some are quite young girls.

When their self-imposed duties call them to Lourdes, they are there not only to perform their natural task of assuaging suffering, but to do

downright hard work as well. They act as *infirmières* and nurses. It is they who lower on sheets the female patients into the piscinæ ; it is they who, with delicate hands and often with the skill of hospital surgeons, bind up fœtid wounds and dress cancerous sores. In short, at Lourdes they vie with the Little Sisters of the Assumption in acting as ministering angels of mercy.

We come to the time when the medical aspect of the Lourdes cures begins to assert itself in a more marked manner before the world. There is now a *Bureau de Constataions* and a first-rate medical staff, and, in short, a *clinique* of the first order at Lourdes. There, the case of every cure, or reputed cure, is controlled and subjected to the closest investigation. The director of this medical school is Dr. de Saint-Macloud, an eminent man and a staunch Catholic.

Dr. de Saint-Macloud was known to be a rigid advocate in the cause of science, even, as it sometimes seemed, at the expense of the supernatural. Every cure that could not stand by itself in the domain of the supernatural was ruthlessly eliminated by him from among those claiming to be above the cognizance of natural laws. It is easy to see that such a man was a host in himself at the head of the Lourdes *clinique*.

This does not mean that, up to that time, the medical side of the phenomenal cures in connection with Lourdes had been neglected. On the con-

trary, medical action in the matter had been strong from the beginning. We have seen Dr. Dozous, himself a freethinker, stepping out of the ranks of his fellow-doctors, and as a man of science, studying Bernadette during more than one of the Apparitions. We have seen him in presence of the first cures regarded as miraculous. And almost, if not quite at once, we have seen him setting incredulity on one side, and bowing down in the simplicity of faith before what he believed to be the visible intervention of Divine agency. Dr. Vergez, coming on the scene immediately afterwards as chief medical authority at the Ecclesiastical Commission appointed by the Bishop of Tarbes, we see him, too, at first staggered, then convinced, and then proclaiming aloud the great healing agency at Lourdes to be an essentially Divine one. Some years later on, and after spending the intervening time in studying and proclaiming the supernatural agency at work at Lourdes, this same Dr. Vergez wrote: "If I am asked to proclaim what I have seen at Lourdes, I will say: 'By the study of the most authentic cures beyond the power of science or of nature to effect, I have been brought face to face with the supernatural.'" His actual words are: "I have touched the miraculous."

Thus was the way paved for the important position which the Lourdes *clinique* was about to assume in the eyes of the medical world. When we see it with its *Bureau des Constatations*, recently estab-

lished under the presidency of Dr. de Saint-Macloud, we are in the middle of the decade between 1880 and 1890.

Dr. Boissarie, afterwards to become eminent in connection with the great Lourdes question, had not as yet taken up his position as a staunch defender of the supernatural. Though far from being an unbeliever in this same supernatural, he was waiting and watching. He wanted, as he said, to see with his own eyes a miracle, and considered that up to that time he had not been able to do so.

Circumstances were about to favour him in this respect. In 1886 a case came before his notice which was to influence him strongly.

It was that of one Célestine Dubois, a domestic servant of Troyes. Concerning it, Dr. Boissarie says: "I saw for the first time a cure which was absolutely inexplicable from a scientific point of view." The facts of the case are as follows: Célestine Dubois had run a needle into her hand, and in her attempt to draw it out had broken it in the flesh. The needle had entered near the base of the thumb. A state of continual suffering ensued; the woman's fingers became contracted. Doctor after doctor of Troyes tried to extract the bit of steel, but in vain. At length, a medical man of the town, Dr. Hervey, made an incision in the hand, and this he kept open for five or six weeks. By this means he was enabled to touch the bit of needle with an instrument, and even

with his finger, but without being able to remove it. He was of opinion that to extract it by an ordinary surgical operation would be attended with danger. Her state continuing the same, Célestine Dubois, in 1886, joined the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. At about a quarter past four in the afternoon, on the day of her arrival at Lourdes, that is, August 20th, she was in what is known as the *Piscine des petits bains*. This is a small, well-lighted room containing a large tub of cold water. Mademoiselle Recoing, of Troyes, was with her. This lady held Célestine's hand in the water for about four minutes, withdrawing it more than once during that time with the object of examining it. There was a third person present—a lady who had accidentally dropped in, who remained, and who was witness of what took place. This was Mademoiselle Antoinette Cornet, directress of the *Piscine des petits bains* and member of the Committee of Notre-Dame de Salut. What did take place during those four minutes Doctor Boissarie tells us in his *Histoire Médicale de Lourdes*. He says that during the few minutes that the hand was held in the water, the bit of broken needle traversed with arrow-like speed the distance of eight centimètres, and that then it came out at the top of the thumb. The same authority goes on to say that the thus rapid passage of the needle though the flesh was marked by a red line, beginning deep down at the point of departure, and appearing just beneath the surface of the flesh as

the point of exit was neared. This passage, he says, carefully examined with a microscope, showed an orifice at the extremity of the thumb, but none anywhere else. How, he asks, could the needle, deeply embedded in the fibrous tissues of the hand for seven years, travel with such speed a distance of eight centimètres through the flesh without encountering obstacles of any kind? It was Mademoiselle Recoing, of Troyes, who, after holding Célestine's hand in the water for four minutes, drew forth the needle when she saw it protruding from the extremity of the thumb.

Six medical men of Lourdes, as well as two of Troyes, Doctors Viardin and Forest, carefully examined Célestine Dubois' case. Moreover, an Ecclesiastical Commission was appointed by the Bishop of Troyes to consider it. The result of these different investigations was to conclude that the manner in which the needle had made its way out of the hand in which it had been imprisoned for seven years was contrary to nature's laws. Dr. de Saint-Maccloud, in reference to this case, said :

“We are in presence of an effect, the cause of which does not belong to human physiology ; consequently, the phenomenon we are considering is distinctly supernatural.”

This hand of Célestine Dubois led Dr. Boissarie to the recognition of the supernatural at Lourdes.

CHAPTER IV.

By this time the sick element of the National Pilgrimage had grown almost to its present proportions, that is, to nearly a thousand members. It was a great moving hospital that the National Pilgrims took with them each year to Lourdes.

The ten years between 1880 and 1890, which saw so much material progress at Lourdes and such expansion on the part of the Lourdes devotion, saw also the gradual rising of the Church of the Rosary, which was solemnly opened to public worship in 1889. The following year, Rome conceded the proper Mass and Office, commemorative of the Apparition.

Cures of pulmonary consumption have stood out in prominence at Lourdes from the beginning. One of these cases is that of an interesting young nun of the Ursuline community of Brive, known as Sister Julianne.

We are in August, 1889. Sister Julianne was slowly dying, her malady being in its last stage.

She had been ill for three years, and in bed for more than six months. Six doctors had pronounced her case to be hopeless. Someone having recently spoken in her presence of a cure effected at Lourdes, she had been heard to say that if she were to go to Lourdes, she knew she should recover. But the poor dying nun was far from wishing to go there.

Here we will reveal a secret that only came to light later on. While still in perfect health, Sister Julianne had offered her life to God as an expiatory sacrifice for sinners. Almost immediately afterwards, the first signs of her mortal disease had begun to shew themselves. Hence her disinclination to go to Lourdes with the object of regaining her health. Submitting, however, to the wishes of her superiors in the matter, she at length consented to go.

The project was at first disapproved of by Dr. Pomarel, the medical man in attendance, on the ground that the patient might die on the road. His consent, however, having been obtained, Sister Julianne set out on her journey September 1st, accompanied by a fellow nun and a lady of Brive.

Arriving late in the day at Lourdes, the little party alighted at the Carmelite convent there. Sister Julianne was considered by all who saw her to be in a dying state. The following morning she was carried out to the vehicle that was to take her to the piscina, the person who carried her intimating

to those around that she would not come back alive. On reaching the piscina she was in an almost unconscious state, and bathed in what seemed to be a death sweat. Those in attendance refused to lower her into the water, on the ground that it was contrary to rule to bathe patients in the last stage of consumption. The case was urged, especially by the companion nun, a sweet-faced little religious, whom the present writer has since known at Brive as Sister Claire. Entreaty prevailing, Sister Julienne was at length let down into the piscina on a sheet. She was let down gently. Her right side only had as yet come in contact with the water when her mouth opened and her face assumed a corpse-like look.

She was at once drawn up and watched with painful anxiety. It was believed that she was about to breathe her last. After a few moments a slight colour came into her cheeks, her eyes opened, and she was seen to draw in breath. She partially rose and then sat upright.

“You are better?” she was asked.

“Yes,” she replied, “I am better.”

Light and expression were coming into her face each moment, and fresh life seemed to be animating her whole being. Refusing to sit down, she dressed herself without help and then walked unaided to the Grotto. There she remained on her knees half-an-hour. On going thence she was acclaimed by the crowd with the strains of the

Magnificat. Afterwards, at the Carmelite convent, she was able to eat solid food for the first time since the previous January.

She walked again to the Grotto in the afternoon.

The following day, at the *Bureau des Constatations*, she, who had been the object of this marvellous transformation, underwent a careful examination at the hands of Dr. de Saint-Macloud. The head of the Lourdes *clinique* could detect in her no trace of her former disease. Six other doctors examined her, and to the like effect.

This cure is dwelt upon at length by Dr. Boissarie in his *Historie Médicale de Lourdes*. The author, who had known Sister Julianne from her childhood, says in reference to her case: "A cure such as hers, effacing at once every sign of disease, is absolutely impossible according to natural laws."

We will dwell upon three remarkable cures belonging to this period, for the reason that, travestied and distorted, the objects of these cures figure in M. Zola's novel *Lourdes*. Clémentine Trouvé, cured of caries of the foot, is the novelist's "Sophie Couteau"; Marie Lemarchand, cured of *lupus*, is his "Elise Rouquet"; and Marie Lebranchu, cured of tuberculosis, is his "Grivotte."

Marie Lemarchand receives bad treatment in the novel. Her face misshapen and swollen, owing to the terrible *lupus* that has attacked her right cheek and lips, is likened to a dog's head with nose eaten away (*tête de chien au museau rongé*). More

than this, M. Zola tries to naturalize her supernatural cure by extending it over several days, and attributing it to successive applications of Lourdes water, applied in the form of lotions, whereas it was effected instantaneously by a single immersion in the piscina, August 21st, 1892.

Dr. Hombre, witness of the marvel, in a written deposition, states as follows: "In place of the hideous wound, a surface was immediately seen, red, it is true, but dry and covered by a new skin." Dr. La Neële, of Caen, who had previously attended the patient, writes: "I am still under the strong impression made upon me by having been brought face to face with this absolutely supernatural cure. Apart from her *lupus*, Marie Lemarchand was suffering at the time from tuberculosis in an advanced stage. I could not detect even a trace of the disease after the disappearance of the *lupus*."

Marie Lebranchu, as "Grivotte," is killed outright in the novel. In reality, she is not only alive, but in good health and at Lourdes in the service of Mademoiselle Node, of the Châlet Saint-Bernard. M. Zola, confronted with her at Lourdes at the *Bureau des Constatations*, admits in his book the reality of her cure, but attributes it to a momentary commotion. According to the testimony of the medical man who had attended her, that is, Dr. Marquez, of the Paris hospital of Laboisière, Marie Lebranchu was suffering from pulmonary

tuberculosis of the third degree. She kept her bed, threw up blood, and was a living skeleton. She was cured by a single immersion in the piscina, on August 22nd, 1892.

Confronted at Lourdes, in 1892, with the fact of Clémentine Trouvé's cure and with Clémentine herself, M. Zola got out of the difficulty before him by saying that he believed nothing but what he saw. Now, as the young girl's cure had taken place the year before, the novelist could say with truth that he had not seen it.

The details of this remarkable case are as follows :—When Clémentine Trouvé went to Lourdes in 1891, at the age of fourteen, she had been for three years suffering from caries of the bones of one of her feet. The foot was swollen and deformed, and fistulæ had formed, through which the doctor in attendance could pass his stylet and touch the decaying bones. The wound, moreover, was in a constant state of suppuration. The cure took place at the first immersion in the piscina, and it was both instantaneous and complete. Clémentine went to the *Bureau des Constatations* with the bandage in her hand, showing upon it signs of recent suppuration, and which had just come off her foot in the water. When the doctors looked at her foot, the only sign they could see of the wound that had been was a slight depression of the part, accompanied by a slightly pink surface.

The wound was healed, the foot had resumed its

shape, and Clémentine Trouvé could walk like other people.

The girl lived at Rouillé, a locality in the department of the Vienne, where the population is composed of more Protestants than Catholics. There her cure became as notorious as her previous state of suffering had been. One of the most inveterate freethinkers of the place, who was nominally a Protestant, when questioned with regard to this case, said: "Sir, I believe in neither God nor devil; but since Clémentine Trouvé's cure, I believe in Notre-Dame de Lourdes." The doctor who had been in the habit of attending the girl at Rouillé, and who was far from being a believer in the supernatural, expressed himself thus: "Whether it be God or the devil that has cured this child, I know not; but what I do know is that she is cured."

CHAPTER V.

THE celebration, in 1897, of the twenty-fifth National Pilgrimage, called the Jubilee Pilgrimage, may be regarded as a fact of historic importance in the Lourdes annals. The directors of the pilgrimage had appealed to all the miraculously-cured of the previous twenty-five years to join the National Pilgrims of this twenty-fifth anniversary. Though some of the favoured ones were dead and others had been lost sight of, yet a good number of those called upon responded. In all, three hundred and fifty cases of signal cures were forthcoming—cures that proclaimed in the face of the medical and scientific world that the manner in which they had been accomplished was inexplicable according to known laws.

In certain respects this Jubilee pilgrimage has no parallel. Monday, August 23rd, was its great day, and the most striking feature of that day was the afternoon procession.

Lourdes was full as only on most stirring occasions, and although it was between four and five in the afternoon, the most brilliant sunshine possible flooded the scene. The procession—possessing, in the persons of its more than three hundred *miraculés*, elements of interest which no other had ever possessed—was, as seen from a distance, a living, moving, sinuous line that seemed interminable. The miraculously-cured, walking together, each carrying a white and blue banner, and some even dressed in white and blue, were a spot in the pageant to which all eyes turned. Religious corporations and associations and orders were represented in the long line which had, at its head, General de Charette's banner of the Sacred Heart stained by some of the best blood of France.

Into the line fell more than a thousand surpliced priests, while the rear was brought up by a group of prelates accompanying Mgr. Bouvier, Bishop of Tarenbaise, carrying the Sacred Host.

The procession, having accomplished its prescribed orbit, was returning, and the singing of the multitude composing it fell like distant music on the ears of the sick throng, drawn up in waiting array in front of the Church of the Rosary. Some reclining, some lying on pallets and stretchers, these sick waited: they knew that the *cortège* had to pass in front of them and between their ranks. The eyes of each were eager to catch a sight of the band of miraculously-cured, with their blue and

white banners. These *miraculés* passed, and the long file of priests and religious with lighted tapers, and, in short, the main body of the procession. But the vital moment had yet to come. This was when the Blessed Sacrament was to pass and pause for a moment over each of the maimed and the halt composing the suffering throng. It came, that solemn and most poignant moment. Poignant too, the voice of the multitude, and especially of the sick multitude, uttering the Gospel cries for the occasion. There was a world of supplication and of religious passion in that single cry, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us!"

Yet, contrary to expectation, and in spite of the exceptional fervour of this exceptional day, when the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given from the portal of the Church of the Rosary, which church seemed to be emerging from a sea of human beings, not a single cure had been effected.

Immediately afterwards a religious of commanding stature, and with a long white beard, made his appearance and addressed the throng from the church portal. This was the Rev. Father Picard, Superior-General of the Augustinians of the Assumption, who came forward to give the Papal blessing. As a preliminary to so doing, the *Confiteor* was intoned by upwards of a thousand priests and religious. The Superior-General then slowly sang the liturgical words, with his hand

raised, and making the sign of the cross on the multitude.

Having spoken and acted in the name of Peter's successor, Father Picard said a few words on his own account. He incited the sick below to faith and hope and confidence. He told them that the more than three hundred miraculously-cured, there that day, were their models.

Then was seen one of the most impressive sights given to mortal eyes to witness. One of the prone ones rose, and then another, and then another. In the space of two hours forty-one had risen, leaving pallets and stretchers behind them.

The Marquis de Laurens, at the head of his *brancardiers*, was there, busy making way for the resuscitated as they passed first into the Church of the Rosary and thence to the *Bureau des Constatations*. Crutches in numbers were seen lying about and stretchers were being borne away as useless. The scene of religious emotion and enthusiasm was as indescribable as, to other than a Catholic mind, it would have been inexplicable. The *Magnificat*, the hymn of hymns for the occasion, rent the air.

It is not our task here to examine these cures from the point of view of medical censorship, but simply to relate a page of history in connection with Lourdes. How explain the sudden rising, walking, and apparent restoration to health of these forty-one persons, more than one of whom had been considered *in extremis* on starting, and all of whom

were, according to medical certificates, seriously ill? "By suggestion" will be the readiest answer. If so, it was suggestion of the kind practised by Peter when, at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, he said to the man lame from his mother's womb:—"Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

It is certain that out of these forty-one cases there were some well-authenticated cures. A writer in the *Correspondant*, commenting at the time on this memorable scene, said as follows: "That day thousands of men were able to touch, so to speak, the supernatural. They were witnesses of forty-one inexplicable cures. The wilfully blind will still deny: *Oculos habent!* But all who had the privilege of being present at this startling manifestation of Divine power, and of the Blessed Virgin's intercession, will say in the fulness of their sincerity and of their intelligence a word which resumes in itself what is grandest and most beautiful under heaven: this word is *Credo!*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE supernatural is to be seen in its effects at Lourdes oftener than actually at work. But sometimes, in presence of the naked human eye, unsightly scales fall away and fresh flesh tissues are formed. A case of this kind has been related to us by Madame X——, a *dame hospitalière* of Lourdes, as having come under her personal notice. It was that of Blanche Leclère, of Vincennes, belonging to the National Pilgrimage of 1898. This girl, who was seventeen years of age, was suffering from *lupus*. Her face, swollen and misshapen, was in wounds; her skin was of fiery redness, her features were partially eaten away, her whole aspect was revolting. On August 22nd, at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, she experienced a feeling of burning in the affected parts. A certain sense of improvement in her condition followed, and remained with her, but this was all. The next day, as the hour of the departure of the members of the National Pilgrimage drew near, no

one thought of classing her otherwise than as among the uncured. Suddenly, in St. Elizabeth's ward of the Hospital of *Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*, as Blanche Leclère was busying herself in putting her things together previous to her departure, the aspect of her face was seen to be changing. In presence of Madame X—— and of several others, the wounds healed, the incrustations fell away, while the skin resumed its natural colour, the face its proportions, and the features their form. This process of transformation lasted half-an-hour, at the end of which time no sign of the hideous disease remained, if we except a pink line round the girl's face showing whither the ravages of the *lupus* had extended.

Blanche Leclère, on realizing her altered state, wept. As she raised her eyes to heaven, her first words were : "Oh, how good God is ! Now I can earn my living."

The cure was verified at once at the *Bureau des Constatations*. The girl, thus rid of one of the most terrible diseases that afflict humanity, had been a sufferer from this same disease for the previous eleven years, and doctors of more than one Paris hospital had tried their skill upon her in vain. The details of her case are given in the *Annales de Notre-Dame de Lourdes* of September 30th, 1898.

This same *dame hospitalière* might almost say that she was witness of another case of the visible

working of the supernatural, so immediate was her view of an eye transformed into a perfect one, which an instant or two before had been sightless and unsightly.

The case is that of Alfred Aubert, a strolling singer, whose most fixed place of residence was at Bordeaux-les-Rouches, in the department of the Loiret. This man had, in 1881, been victim of an accident, which at the end of two years had left him totally blind. One eye had suppurated and disappeared. The other had remained, but in an atrophied state and sightless. Aubert had spent the intervening fourteen years in wandering from place to place with his family, earning a precarious existence by singing. Often face to face with want, he had never lost trust in God, and his religious life had been, moreover, marked by a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In 1897 circumstances took him to Lourdes as a member of the National Pilgrimage. On the morning of Saturday, August 21st, he was with others in front of the Grotto, on the silver altar of which the Holy Sacrifice was being celebrated, and he happened to be close to Madame X——, the *dame hospitalière* alluded to. This lady's office for the moment was to look after a young sick girl who could not move, and to whom the priest was about to bring the Blessed Sacrament. Turning to Aubert she asked him if he were going to communicate.

Having done so that morning, he replied in the

negative, but remained on his knees in prayer. In turning to him and putting her question, the *dame hospitalière* had had time to notice his one eye blurred, opaque, protruding and repellent. The priest with the ciborium drew near, and the Sacred Host approached the sick girl's lips. In another moment the God of the Eucharist had passed on to other sufferers in the open air in front of the Grotto. But, in His passing, He had restored sight to the blind, for Madame X—, glancing an instant afterwards at the man beside her, saw a clear, limpid eye looking up at hers. The eye was complete as to form, colour and expression, and tears were streaming from it. Alfred Aubert's eye was thus opened to the light for the first time after fourteen years of total blindness. Examined directly afterwards at the *Bureau des Constatations*, it was found that he could read a book of diamond print. He had gone to Lourdes in possession of unquestionable medical certificates extending over a period of more than ten years, and stating that his blindness was incurable. The technical details of his case are given in the *Annales de Notre-Dame de Lourdes* of September 30th, 1897.

Since the opening of the miraculous spring by Bernadette, each year at Lourdes has seen its succession of remarkable cures. There has been no missing link in the chain of years, each one being noteworthy and historic. In each National Pilgrimage there is material for a book.

Coming to the first year of the present century, we dwell willingly on the case of M. Gabriel Gargam, who was cured August 20th, 1901, on the first day of the National Pilgrimage.

The *Daily Mail*, by the pen of its Paris correspondent, gave a graphic description of this cure, from which we quote as follows :

“The Host had just been carried past us yesterday afternoon, when there came an inarticulate cry from a man lying on a stretcher just in front of me, and a sobbing exclamation from a white-haired woman near the stretcher.

“The man upon it grasped its sides with hands which looked like claws, so thin were they, and with a convulsive movement raised himself to a sitting posture.

“‘Help me up,’ he gasped, while two great tears rolled down his emaciated cheeks into his beard. ‘I can walk, I feel I can!’ Ready hands helped him to his feet, and, like one risen from the dead, he stood, hatless and trouserless, and with nothing on him but a nightdress and a dressing gown. ‘Let me walk!’ he cried again in a queer hollow voice.

“‘Hear him, Holy Virgin, hear him!’ sobbed the mother. ‘He has hardly spoken for twenty months.’ In sight of the thousands massed along the line of procession, this rag of humanity, with legs like rolling pins and with feet a mass of sores, walked five tottering steps upon his dressing gown, which had been pulled from his shoulders for him

to stand on, and then fell back exhausted into the outstretched arms around him."

Exhausted or not, Gabriel Gargam was a cured man from that hour, or rather from the moment when he had gasped, "Help me up! I can walk, I feel I can!" In order that the reader may understand his case, we must look back. A post office letter-sorter, employed in the railway night service between Paris and Bordeaux, this man had been one of the most seriously injured in a railway accident that had happened nearly two years before at Livernaut, near Montmoreau. The spinal marrow had been injured, and paralysis of the lower members had followed, together with suppurating wounds in the feet. Hardly able to speak, and becoming more emaciated day by day, this human wreck had passed the intervening months lying on boards in a hospital ward at Angoulême. The apparent hopelessness of his condition may be judged of from the fact that, in accordance with a verdict given by the civil tribunal of Angoulême and ratified by that of Bordeaux, the Orléans Railway Company had consented to grant the injured man an indemnity of 60,000 francs and a pension for life of 6,000 francs.

Gabriel Gargam, being at that time in religious matters a practical unbeliever, it was at the instance of others that he had consented to go to Lourdes. His cure took place between four and five in the afternoon, as the Blessed Sacrament was being borne through the ranks of the sick. Hardly

conscious just before of what was going on, it was as the Sacred Host was passing that he felt a violent commotion within him and that he said : " Help me up ! I can walk ! I feel I can ! "

Though still emaciated and weak, he became at once able to walk and to take food. Also, at once, the wounds in his feet began to heal, the healing process being even visible to lookers-on.

Dr. Boissarie, in testifying to the thoroughness of this case, stated that he who had been the object of it was still a living skeleton, but a skeleton that in the eyes of all was regaining life and strength each moment. The case at once took its place as one of the most conclusive and remarkable of the year.

Meeting two months later Gabriel Gargam, at the *Bureau des Constatations* of Lourdes, we saw before us a tall man with a grave, pleasant face, and shewing no sign of infirmity or ill-health.

Having heard that he had regained his faith as a Christian and a Catholic, on the day of his cure and at the moment of the passing of the Blessed Sacrament, we ventured a question on the matter. The reply was : " The change did not take place at the passing of the Blessed Sacrament ; it had taken place in the morning at the Grotto. "

The aged mother was standing by and our eyes met.

" Oh, the prayers that had been said for him ! "

she murmured ; “ Oh, the novenas to the Sacred Heart that had been made ! ”

Here then was the explanation. With this, as with so many of the Lourdes cures, there was, behind a great physical fact, a spiritual background of prayer and supplication. In presence of this humble Monica, who, presumably by her prayers, had obtained her son's conversion and her son's cure, we said : “ You ought to be the happiest mother in France.” In reference to his previous state of unbelief, we heard Gabriel Gargam say : “ But I believe now and shall believe evermore.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NEARLY fifty years have passed since the first miracles at Massabiello. We are in another century, points of view have changed; and yet in this dawn of a new age, we find Lourdes the greatest of scientific battle grounds. It is a spot where the supernatural is proving itself by physical facts—an arena where science and the supernatural cross swords. It is a medical school to which other medical schools look, including those of Nancy and the Salpêtrière.

The two last-mentioned are often placed in opposition to that of Lourdes, and the words hysteria and hypnotism are mentioned as putting an extinguisher on the miraculous element in the Lourdes phenomena. The hypnotic cures, and also the hypnotic tricks, associated with the Salpêtrière and the name of M. Charcot, are by opponents sometimes spoken of in the same breath with unexplainable cures effected at Lourdes.

Is hypnotism at work at Lourdes? Dr. Boissarie

answers the question in his *Histoire Médicale de Lourdes*, by saying: "Hypnotism means sleep, and no one sleeps at Lourdes." Is suggestion at work at Lourdes? The same authority in the same work answers the question as follows: "Suggestive action of untold power is without effect in producing cures at Lourdes." "Nor can sustained effort of the will produce them," he says, adding: "There is no law or rule for these cures, which sometimes take place in the bodies of unconscious infants, and sometimes in those of persons who have long ceased to hope or to look for their restoration to health." Our author concludes in italics: "*The programme of these cures is not written by the hand of man.*" For our part we may say that, if there is suggestion at work at Lourdes, it is of the kind which inspires holy hope and something of that faith to which Our Lord alluded when He said: "If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, you shall remove mountains."

But we will carry the question out of the domain of hypothesis into that of facts. Hypnotism and suggestion do not claim dominion over other than nervous diseases; these occult powers do not pretend to be able to cure a cancer suddenly, or fill a gaping wound with sound flesh. Any comparison possible between the schools of Nancy and the Salpêtrière and Lourdes is made on the ground of nervous maladies alone, and this comparison, weak at best, loses all weight in presence of the fact that the

Lourdes *clinique*, in basing its claims on the supernatural character of certain of its cures, carefully eliminates from the question nervous diseases of every kind. Though numbers of cases belonging to the class of nervous affections are, to the medical men concerned, clearly marked by the finger of God, yet, for the sake of argument, they are ruthlessly set aside as not affording sufficient proof of the supernatural. With the object of being able to assert this same supernatural before the world and in the teeth of science, only those cases are chosen on which medical skill has proved powerless and which have been effected in a manner either unexplainable by nature's laws, or at variance with these same laws.

In view of the work being done by the Lourdes *clinique*, its importance as a medical tribunal is explained. It marks, as nearly as the present state of science will allow of, the dividing line between the natural and the supernatural.

Over against Lourdes thus seen in its scientific aspect, there is another Lourdes more pregnant with facts, more world-embracing in its contact with innumerable thousands. This Lourdes is the *rendez-vous* of souls, the great focus of Catholic life, the spot pre-eminent among others, where suffering humanity is not only healed and cured, but morally renovated. It is the spot where people pray with the voice of multitudes, and where Heaven rains down graces, visible and invisible. In

speaking here of visible graces, we allude especially to that class of cures on which the supernatural sets no distinct mark, and which Catholic doctors designate as graces and blessings. The objects of cures of this class, however, consider, for the most part, that Heaven has spoken as clearly in their case, as if they had been healed in a manner at variance with nature's laws.

A remarkable case of this kind, that of Olympe Némery, a young woman living at 54 Rue de Sèvres, Clamart, near Paris, came before our notice at Lourdes, September 8th, 1901. It was Sunday, and near five o'clock. The Blessed Sacrament had passed amid the ranks of the sick, and was about to enter the Church of the Rosary, when suddenly the young woman to whom we allude, and over whom the Sacred Host had just rested, rose from her stretcher. She ascended the steps leading to the church, and kneeling down like those around her, with arms extended in the form of a cross, she joined in the *Parce Domine*. Appearing as sick unto death a minute before, she seemed as one resuscitated. The vast throng of lookers-on included a band of English pilgrims. A young priest of this band said to us on the subject the following day: "I do not think we could have a more visible proof of the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament than the cure of that woman yesterday afternoon."

In truth, Olympe Némery, before rising from

her stretcher, had appeared to be one of the most seriously ill of the sick around : she had been subject to constant vomiting, and had been unable to keep down food ; that very morning, or during the previous night, she had received the last Sacraments. After being examined at the *Bureau des Constatations* on that Sunday afternoon, she was accompanied back to her hospital by a rejoicing crowd. No one hesitated to apply to her cure the word miraculous. Yet the Lourdes tribunal at whose bar the miracles are tried was not ready to speak in this sense.

Alluding a few days afterwards, at the *Bureau des Constatations*, to this case of Olympe Némery, we heard from Dr. Cox, an English medical man, Dr. Boissarie's valued coadjutor, words to the following effect : "She was suffering from paralysis produced by nervous exhaustion, a disease curable in itself, yet one that is rarely cured. That this cure might have been effected under natural conditions is alone sufficient to prevent us from attaching importance to it as a case of proof. We look upon it as a grace and blessing for the person concerned, and that is all."

Thus was summarily dismissed, at this most inexorable of human tribunals, a case which, by the numbers of persons before whose notice it had come, had been considered miraculous, and which, seen as angels see, perhaps really was so. Often *vox populi* in such matters is *vox Dei*.

It is possible that at this same inexorable tribunal some of our Lord's miracles would not have been allowed to pass muster on the ground that paralytics and cripples raised by the Divine hands showed in their bodies no organic lesions, and that their sufferings could be traced to a nervous origin. All honour, however, to this Lourdes tribunal which throws down the gauntlet to up-to-date science.

CHAPTER IX.

THE pilgrimage season at Lourdes is from May until October, though it is only during the last three summer months that thousands continually pour into the town so as to render it little else than a vast hostelry.

The culminating degrees of intensity of the religious life there at the height of the season may be said to be reached each day at the afternoon procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Each of these glorious manifestations in honour of the Eucharist is typical; each resembles each; each is unlike anything else in the world.

The procession takes place between four and five in the afternoon. It is being awaited by the sick, lying or reclining in rows on the great open space in front of the Church of the Rosary. Behind these, on each side, a dense crowd darkens the ground. The noble Rosary Church of Byzantine style, presenting, with the graceful basilica above it, the effect as of one block, shows its ledges

and parapets to be lined with human beings. Human clusters, too, are gathered on the rocky heights behind. Every available spot is occupied whence the anticipated scene of splendour can be looked down on. Many thousands of persons are assembled in a comparatively small space.

The lengthy procession passes along, and its main body is falling into place above, when its rear enters the precincts allotted to the sick. As the strains of the *Adoremus in æternum* draw nearer, all eyes are turned in the direction of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by one or more bishops and a line of ecclesiastics in cloth of gold. All know that sublime moments are near. All know that Christ, in His sacramental presence, is about to visit in person and pause above each of His suffering members, there assembled. Then may be said, in the words of the English poet, "The prayers of men and angels are as one." The attitude of the multitude becomes at once one of prayer. Arms are extended in the form of a cross. This is noticeable in numbers of the poor, prone, hoping sick, in the *dames hospitalières* tending these sick, in the *brancardiers* drawn up in lines in the foreground, in the masses grouped around, and in the farther-removed pilgrims up on the heights. Sweetly, grandly, yet as a full-voiced wail, the strains of the *Parce Domine* rise, their burden, *ne in æternum irascaris nobis*, seeming to linger with unutterable pathos on the summer air. The Gospel invocations,

far-reaching, thrilling, and uttered by a priestly voice, follow. Each is repeated by thousands of voices forming one, until the rocks around ring. Among the words that fall on the ear are: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!" "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole!" "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick?" Every few seconds nothing is heard but a succession of Hosannahs. It is impossible to describe the effect of this Gospel cry, uttered by a multitude in unison, and echoed by the heights around. It is a cry of appeal as one of triumph, for at each sign of a cure having been effected, the Hosannahs redouble in intensity.

At intervals the invocations are interrupted by the singing of the *Ave Maris Stella*, as well as of the *Parce Domine*. Then the Gospel cries are resumed. Among these are: "Thou art the Son of the Living God!" "Thou art the Resurrection and the Life!" "Thou art Christ, Son of the Virgin Mary!" "O Lord, glorify Thy Mother!" "We adore Thee, we glorify Thee, and we praise Thee!"

There is no discordant note, nothing of febrile religious excitement in the mighty shock of sound coming from the throats of thousands. Though the scene is pervaded by an intensity of religious life which the chain of the Christian ages cannot have seen surpassed, it is at the same time marked

by perfect calm and order. To those who fix their eyes on the gleaming monstrance, it is as if the Man-God were before them in the same human presence in which He trod the Judæan hills nineteen centuries before.

When the last strains of the *Tantum Ergo* have died away and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament has been given, the crowd, massed in front of the Church of the Rosary, breaks up, and an indescribable scene of animation follows. The sick await their *brancardiers* to bear them away, while those regarded as cured are being followed rejoicingly to the *Bureau des Constatations*. In the midst of the vast throng in movement, attention is not unfrequently drawn to a small circle of *brancardiers* moving slowly forward and holding together by their leather straps. They are surrounding a person in the throes of the death agony, and whom two of their body are bearing away on a pallet or stretcher. We have thus seen a young girl in white borne away, and to a step so measured and gentle, that had the sufferer been on her bed she could not have felt the movement less. Two *dames hospitalières* walked beside her fanning. The protecting circle was to afford air and to keep off the crowd. Meanwhile the *Ave Maria* was being softly murmured around to soothe and strengthen the passing soul.

What a chapter might be written on these *brancardiers*! As has been said, they are gentle as

women in handling their sick, many of these being nothing more than remnants of humanity from the Paris hospitals. It seems to us that beside them the *preux chevaliers* of old are of less account. Those battled for the rewards of an earthly lady-love, while these toil for the unseen smile of her whose white effigy looks down upon them from the rock of Massabiello.

As the great throng breaks up in earnest, some go to their temporary homes, while others eat their evening meal in the open air sitting beneath trees or by the rolling Gave, this Gave the while bordering the scene on one side as with a line of silver or flashing crimson in the rays of the setting sun.

The great days at Lourdes close with brilliant illuminations in the evening. The first of these illuminations is often the moon rising in her glory and accompanied by a few great stars. Then the great cross of flame on the height of the *Pic du Jer* appears against the night sky. Then the *Château Fort* shews its lines of fire in the distance. And then the basilica and the Church of the Rosary become suddenly ablaze with coloured electric lights. The incomparable night picture is not complete until the torchlight procession, with its something like 50,000 lighted tapers, and sometimes more, has encircled the Esplanade of the Rosary from end to end with a broad moving band of flame. The *Ave, ave, ave, Maria!* then chanted by the thousands assembled, can be heard all over Lourdes.

The crowds who help to fill Lourdes during the summer months take with them every variety of costume, from the quaint coifs of Brittany and Normandy to the snowy kerchiefs folded over the breasts of the women of Arles. There are people there from every clime in Europe. There all languages meet. There the sonorous Hosannahs, in honour of the Eucharist, may at times be heard ringing out in Italian and at others in German. At times, too, the volume of sound is swelled by "Faith of our Fathers," and "Hail, Star of the Sea," sung in English by a band of English pilgrims.

One of the striking features of the pilgrim life at Lourdes—so striking as to be almost phenomenal—is the Christian resignation and calm content of the great legion of uncured. These seem to understand to the full, though probably without ever having heard or read them, the Gospel words: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the prophet, and none of them were cleansed saving Naaman, the Syrian." *

In the way of description, the most cursory view of Lourdes would not be complete without a glance at the pile of buildings on the rock of Massabiello, which has been the Catholic world's response to the request for a "chapel," formulated by the Immaculate in one of her Apparitions to Bernadette. The crypt, hewn in great part out of the solid rock, was the first to take form. Then

* Luke iv. 27.

the basilica, in thirteenth century style, grew above it. Then, below it, on ground level with that of the Grotto, rose the Church of the Rosary. This daring architectural attempt, in which various styles meet, seems, as seen in a general glance, to serve as a splendid base for the graceful basilica above. The originality of conception of the Rosary Church is carried out in the colossal semicircular double balustrades, which it throws forward, one on each side, which, to use a simile already applied to them, seem as arms wherewith to embrace the multitudes that gather within. These balustrades are built on arches and form two broad walks leading up to the basilica. As many as 35,000 persons can assemble within the enclosure which they form. The view in front is the Esplanade of the Rosary, a long vista of sward and trees.

The unique pile we are considering has been built at the expense of the Catholic world. Before leaving it we will glance within at its three separate parts.

The crypt is a very gem in stone, pervaded, as it seems, by a sort of mediæval glory, with its lancet windows, subdued colours, rich mosaics, and marvellous sidelights. The interior of the basilica charms by its effect of unity, as by the strength, simplicity and elegance of its pure Gothic. Banners from different countries, including England, hang around. Of the twelve lamps before the tabernacle, the centre one is from Ireland. Above

the high altar, of white-veined Carrara marble, there is a beautiful crowned statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, the crown being of gold and diamonds. At the feet of the statue lies a gold gemmed palm, the gift of Pius IX. In the Church of the Rosary, with its semi-gloom and roseate light thrown from on high, the visitor is attracted by the fifteen chapels in honour of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, all wrought in exquisite mosaics.

There is language in this three-fold temple raised to God's glory ; it is the language of the Catholic world proclaiming belief in the Lourdes Apparitions. The temple speaks another language also—that of the many thousand *ex-voto* tablets on its walls, proclaiming graces received and prayers answered.

This altogether unique pile is seen against an amphitheatre of Pyrenean heights, against the majesty of eternal hills. The play of colour on these hills is, in a general way, rather soft and subdued than brilliant, and is to be seen in beautiful effects of grey and green. But when nature here begins throwing on her carmines with a lavish hand, she knows how to incarnadine a whole mountain by a single stroke. The *Pic du Jer* is the highest summit round Lourdes. We remember to have seen, on a fine June evening, this height and its adjacent one suddenly crimsoned by a glow from the setting sun, the background the while being of deepest indigo. The glow, luminous,

translucent, all-suffusing, and turning greys to purple, seemed of a radiance not of earth. No human artist could have thrown such colours on his canvas. The incarnadined mass was as of quivering, living, sentient.

The *Château Fort*, perched on its solitary rock, is one of Lourdes' picturesque features. For centuries the fortress was in the hands of the English. This means that this part of France was comprised in the rich heritage which Eleanor of Aquitaine took to the English crown.

But natural effects of sky and mountain, and striking features and historic considerations, sink into insignificance beside the incomparable religious beauty and grandeur of modern Lourdes. By modern Lourdes, we mean what pertains to the rock of Massabiello. There are other rocks in France with sacred memories attached to them, but none that we know of that, in less than half a century, has had time to become as polished marble by contact with the lips of innumerable multitudes. In all, Lourdes is a spot without parallel in the Christian world. There, Gospel scenes are renewed as vividly as when the Gospel narrative was first enacted; there, is a Pool of Bethesda needing no angel to move its waters; there, in His sacramental presence, Christ heals as He did in the days of His flesh.

PART V.

Pontmain.

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CHAPTER I.

WE are in January, 1871. Paris was besieged; two-thirds of the country were in the enemy's power; the battle of Le Mans had laid Mayenne and Brittany open to the invaders. Brittany as yet remained intact; but the irruption of the invaders into the neighbouring Mayenne made the movement westward appear imminent. Then would France have been swept by German soldiery from the Rhine to her extremest ocean frontier. This is the historic background against which the Apparition of Pontmain must be seen. But there is another background to our subject: it is that of prayer rising from different parts of France as from one heart and from one voice. The voice of supplication grew more intense and more piteous at and towards that spot where the invader's next attack was expected. This spot was Laval, chief town of the Mayenne.

There priests and people had besieged Heaven with their prayers, praying especially at the shrine

of Notre-Dame d'Avenières. Rennes was not behindhand in the movement; nor Saint-Brieux, which was a very stronghold of prayer in the present emergency. There, on the memorable January 17th with which we have to do, supplications under exceptional circumstances rose for France, and a solemn promise was made. The hour was between five and six in the evening. The spot where this patriotic and religious manifestation took place was the well-known chapel of *Notre-Dame d'Espérance* (Our Lady of Hope), the seat of the Archconfraternity founded under that name.

With the background of prayer thus faintly limned before us, we will glance on this same evening of January 17th, 1871, from Saint-Brieux in Brittany to Pontmain in the Mayenne—forty leagues off.

Pontmain, a hamlet of some five hundred inhabitants, was to become for ever memorable because of the page of its history to be written that night. Even its geographical position on the borderland between Brittany and Mayenne was to assume historical importance. Seen by the light of the celestial drama about to be enacted above it, it was to appear as a sentinel guarding Brittany and driving back the invader.

Belonging to the diocese of Laval, Pontmain was sharing in the fear and desolation reigning throughout that city, which the Germans were hourly expected to beseige. On that night, when it was

about to pass into history, we see it beneath a starlit sky and with the whitened roofs of its houses and homesteads showing against a carpet of frost and snow. The air was intensely cold. The hour was between five and six. From this scene, already becoming wrapped in night gloom, we will single out a barn in which, beneath the eye of their father, César Barbedette, two boys were busy breaking up gorse as food for cattle. The lads, Eugène and Joseph, were aged respectively ten and twelve. They were interrupted in their work by the entrance of a woman of the locality, Jeannette Détails by name. This person had that day heard tidings calculated to console the Barbedette family, and it was to convey these tidings that she looked into the barn that evening. The news was concerning a young soldier, Auguste Friteau, who was the son of César Barbedette's wife by a former marriage, and, consequently, half-brother to the boys, Eugène and Joseph.

The father and the younger boy, seated on the furze which they had been breaking up, listened to what Jeannette had to say. Not so the elder boy, who, almost at once, went to the open door and stood there looking up at the sky. This conduct was the more noticeable on his part for the reason that he was particularly fond of the absent Auguste Friteau, who was moreover his godfather.

Joseph Barbedette, later on, alluding to this circumstance, says : " Humanly speaking, I have

never been able to understand why Eugène left us just as we were hearing news of his godfather, of whom he was so fond." Eugène's reason, as given afterwards, was that he went to see what the weather was like. During the quarter-of-an-hour that followed he remained standing by the open door looking up at the sky. At first he looked at the stars, which appeared to him unusually bright and numerous. Suddenly his sight became rivetted. Above the house in front of him, and a little behind it, high in the air, though near enough to be distinctly seen, he saw what he took to be a beauteous human figure. The words that afterwards framed themselves in his mind to express what he then saw were: "*Une grande belle dame.*" He was not frightened. On the contrary, he felt happy, and, though moved to the soul, continued to gaze.

The conversation within had come to an end, and Jeanette Détais was about to leave. As the woman stood by the door Eugène said to her: "Jeannette, look above Augustin Guidécoq's house and tell me if you see anything."

Jeannette looked. "I see nothing at all, Eugène," was the reply.

César Barbedette and his younger son, hearing these words, came to the door and looked out. The father was the first to look up. All he could see was a blue starlit sky. Then Eugène said to his brother: "Can you see anything, Joseph?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the latter, "I see a tall, beautiful lady!" (*Une grande belle dame.*)

"How is she dressed?" asked Eugène.

"She has a blue dress and blue *chaussons*," said the other.

"Has she a crown on her head?" was next asked.

"Yes," was the reply; "a gold crown getting wider towards the top, and with a red line round the middle; and she wears a black veil."

The younger boy's description exactly corresponded with what the elder one had seen and continued to see.

The father listened to the boys, looking up at the sky all the time. After a few seconds, he said: "My poor little boys, you see nothing at all. If there were anything to be seen, I should see it as well as you. Go in and finish breaking up the gorse. Supper will soon be ready."

Then, turning to Jeannette Détails, he added: "Say nothing about this to anyone, as it might cause talk. The children are mistaken."

"You need have no fear that I shall say anything," replied the woman, and she went her way.

The boys went back to their work in the barn. Needless to say their thoughts were not with what they were doing, but with what they had seen.

The father's thoughts appeared to be in the same direction, for after a few moments he stopped short

and said : " Eugène, go and see if the same thing is to be seen."

The boy was at the barn door in a second. " Oh yes, father !" he exclaimed joyfully ; " it is just the same as before."

" In that case," said the father, " go and fetch your mother. If there is anything to be seen, she will see it ; but say nothing to Louise" (Louise was the servant). " You have only," continued César Barbedette, " to tell your mother that I want to speak to her."

The elder boy ran off, the younger one the while taking advantage of the break in the work to slip outside the door. There he continued looking up at the figure in the firmament that had so rivetted his gaze a few minutes before.

Before going further it will be well to give a description of this figure in the night sky. Presently, on that spot, every detail concerning it was to be told again and again to a little crowd assembled. And later on, able pens and enlightened minds were to scatter to the four quarters of the globe the facts put forth that evening. But for our purpose of conveying to the reader in human words something of the sublime picture which the children saw, we prefer quoting from the *Récit d'un Voyant* of the Rev. Joseph Barbedette, now a priest and member of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. What Joseph Barbedette said on this subject as a child he has written as a man ;

and, to use the words of the Rev. Jean-Baptiste Lémins, O.M.I., his testimony "is a priestly one—an oath, so to speak, renewed each day on the altar and over the chalice, and signed with the blood of Christ." His description is as follows:—

"In the air, seven or eight mètres above Augustin Guidécoq's house, I saw a woman of extraordinary beauty. She appeared to be young—about eighteen or twenty years of age—and tall of stature. She was clad in a garment of deep blue. When we were told to describe exactly the shade of this blue, we could only do so by comparing it to balls of indigo such as laundresses use for rinsing linen. Her dress was covered with gold stars, pentagonal in form, all of the same size, and brilliant, but without emitting rays. They were not very numerous, and seemed to be scattered over the blue without regard to method. The blue garment was ample, showing certain strongly-marked folds, and without girdle or compression of any kind from the neck to the feet. The sleeves were ample and long, falling over the hands. On the feet, which the dress left uncovered, were *chaussons* of the same blue as the dress and ornamented with gold bows. On the head was a black veil half covering the forehead, concealing the hair and ears, and falling over the shoulders. Above this was a gold crown resembling a diadem, higher in front than elsewhere, and widening out at the sides. A red line, from five to six millimètres wide,

encircled the crown at about the middle. The hands were small, and extended towards us as in the 'miraculous medal,' but without emitting rays. The face was slightly oval. To the freshness of youth was added the most exquisite delicacy of feature and of tint, the complexion being pale rather than otherwise. Smiles of ineffable sweetness played about the mouth. The eyes, of unutterable tenderness, were fixed on us. I give up further attempting to describe the beautiful figure of her who looked down upon us and smiled. Like a true mother, she seemed happier in looking at us than we in contemplating her."

The writer continues : "Notwithstanding that it was night, and that we were separated from the beautiful Apparition by a distance of about a hundred metres, we could see every detail of the face as distinctly as if it had been in full daylight and we had been close by."

He who, as a priest and a religious, gives us this description, was, as a lad of ten, still looking up into the night sky, when his mother, Victoire Barbedette, arrived on the scene on the memorable January evening in question. More than this, the little boy was not only looking up into the heavens, but clapping his hands with delight, and exclaiming : "Oh, how beautiful ! how beautiful !" The father meanwhile was looking on in silence. The mother, in presence of this ebullition on the part of her youngest son, went up to the little lad, and giving

him a smart slap on the arm, said : “ Will you be quiet? Do you not see that the neighbours are looking at us? ”

“ I cared little what the neighbours were doing,” said Joseph afterwards, “ but this smart admonition from my mother made me understand that my raptures were out of place.”

“ Mother,” said Eugène, the elder boy, “ look up yonder above the house. Do you not see something?” The mother looked in the direction pointed to, and then said that she saw nothing.

On this, both boys said together : “ Do you not see a tall, beautiful lady with a blue dress, and a black veil and a crown on her head?”

“ I see nothing at all,” was the reply.

The father continued to look and to listen in silence, but moved to the extent that his eyes were full of tears.

His wife, noticing this, and knowing, moreover, that her boys were not in the habit of lying, began to ask questions. After listening to what the two had to say, her first impression was that it was an Apparition of the Blessed Virgin they had seen.

By this time the sound of voices and the exclamations of the younger boy had attracted the attention of neighbours, and people were seen looking out at their doors.

“ What is the matter?” asked one from a little distance.

“ Nothing,” said Victoire Barbedette ; “ the

children say they see something, but we see nothing at all." On this, carrying out a previous idea, she gathered her family round her in the barn and shut the door. There, the little party fell on their knees, and with faces turned in the direction of the Apparition, they recited five times the Lord's Prayer and five times the Hail Mary.

This done, the boys, with their mother's leave, again opened the barn door.

"Do you still see the same thing?" asked Victoire.

"Oh yes, just the same, mother," was the reply. "I shall go and fetch my spectacles," said the good woman, "and then I shall see as well as you." She quickly came back, followed by Louise the servant. "Now," said she, adjusting her spectacles, "I too shall be able to see. In what direction is it?"

"Yonder, mother, yonder," said the two boys pointing with their finger.

"Mother Victoire," as she was familiarly called in the burgh, began looking as intently as she was able. Louise, the servant, did the same, but neither she nor her mistress could see anything but the stars.

At this juncture, according to the testimony of the two boys, the smile on the face of the Apparition became more marked than heretofore.

Balked in her attempt to see what her sons saw, the mother's action assumed a shade of asperity. Turning to the lads, she said: "The truth is, you

see nothing at all, and you are two little story-tellers. Go in at once and finish your work. Supper will be ready."

"Though not in the habit of humouring us, our mother had never spoken to us so harshly before," said Joseph Barbedette, alluding long afterwards to this incident.

Compelled to return to their work in the barn, the two boys had quickly finished. They then went home, walking backwards all the way, in order not to lose sight for a moment of the beautiful figure in the sky.

"I would stay there all the time if I could," said Eugène to his father. Almost the first words of the youngest boy on entering his home were: "Mother, may we go back to the barn when we have finished supper?"

The mother consented. "Let us make haste then," said Eugène.

"Do not let us even sit down," said the other.

The two having quickly despatched their food, were about to set forth again when their mother said to them: "Since you are going back there, if you still see the same thing, say again five times the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary;' but do not kneel down because of the cold. Then come back."

The boys, on reaching the spot, in their joy at seeing the Apparition as before, forgot their mother's injunction not to kneel down. They

instinctively fell on their knees at once and began saying five times the *Pater* and the *Ave*.

The father, watching them from his house door, said : " They must see the same thing, for they are on their knees saying, no doubt, the prayers you told them to say."

The prayers ended, they returned home as they had been told to do.

The mother, more interested than she wished to appear, began asking questions as to the size of the figure in the sky.

"She is about the size of Sister Vitaline," was the reply. Sister Vitaline was the nun who taught the boys at school. An idea flashed through Victoire Barbedette's mind which she lost no time in carrying into effect. Accompanied by her son Eugène, she at once set forth in quest of Sister Vitaline, saying to herself that nuns were better than other people, and that if there was anything in the sky to be seen, this nun would see it.

She found the good sister in the schoolroom saying her office, and asked her to accompany her at once to the barn. "The children see something in the sky," she said. "I have not been able to see anything, nor has Louise, but that is, I suppose, because our eyes are not good enough."

"My eyes are excellent," said Sister Vitaline, "and if there is anything to be seen, I do not doubt but that I shall be able to see it."

The little party of three set off. When they had

reached the barn door, Eugène, pointing to the spot where the Apparition was, said : " Now, do you see it, Sister Vitaline ? "

" It is of no use for me to open my eyes wide," was the nun's reply after a moment or two, " for I can see nothing at all."

" Not see it," exclaimed the boy energetically. " Do you not," he continued, " see those three stars forming like a triangle ? "

" Yes," she replied, " I see them."

" Well then," pursued the other, " the highest of those stars is just above the head of the beautiful lady (*belle dame*)."

Sister Vitaline looked again, but could not see more than at first. Under the circumstances she decided on returning home at once. Victoire Barbedette accompanied her back to the community house, which at the time sheltered but three nuns in all, and when about to leave, exacted from her a promise to say nothing to anyone of the subject which had just brought them together.

The nun gave the promise, and quickly broke it, for on entering and seeing three little pupils warming themselves by the fire, she said to them : " Little girls, go with Victoire ; she has something to show you."

" What is it ? " they asked.

" I cannot tell you," said Victoire, " as I have not seen it myself ; but the boys say there is something to be seen."

The little girls were Françoise Richer, Jeanne-Marie Lebossé, and Augustine Mouton. They set forth with Victoire at their head, and having no idea of the nature of the unusual sight there was to be seen.

On drawing near the spot for which they were making, Françoise Richer, looking up, exclaimed : " I see something above the house of Augustin Guidecoq, but I cannot tell what it is." In truth, she was getting a side and confused view of what was about to break on her sight in its full beauty and splendour.

Eugène Barbedette was calling to them from before the barn door. As soon as they had joined him, and before they had heard a word of what he had to say, Françoise and Jeanne-Marie cried out together : " Oh, the beautiful lady in a blue dress with gold stars ! " They then gave a detailed description of the Apparition, which exactly corresponded with that previously given by the two boys.

It may be mentioned here that the third little girl, Augustine Mouton, on looking up, saw nothing but the blue, starlit sky.

By this time Joseph Barbedette and his father were on the scene, as well as a few neighbours drawn thither by curiosity. Then Sister Vitaline and her companion nun, Sister Marie-Edouard, made their appearance. Sister Vitaline quickly asked whether the same thing was still to be seen.

“Oh, yes,” cried the four children together; “we see a tall, beautiful lady in a blue dress covered with stars.”

Sister Marie-Edouard tried to see, as Sister Vitaline had done, but with no better success. “Since it is only the children that see,” said she, “we must go and fetch other children and younger ones.”

She at once started off in quest of others, and intending to bring back with her, if she could, the venerable parish priest of Pontmain, Abbé Guérin.

Meanwhile, the little group of people by the barn door increased. While the three great stars forming a triangle could be distinctly seen by all, the sublime picture in part enframed within remained invisible except to the four *voyants*.

A note of prayer was struck by Sister Vitaline, who began reciting aloud, in union with the bystanders, the Rosary of the Japanese Martyrs, while the little crowd around continued to increase.

As Sister Marie-Edouard came back accompanied by Abbé Guérin and others, she called out, while still at a little distance: “Do you see it still?”

“Oh, yes,” was the reply.

One of the new-comers was a woman, carrying in her arms, well-wrapped up, a delicate boy of between six and seven. It was her grandson, Auguste Friteau. The child, on arriving on the scene, uttered a cry of delight. He, too, on looking up, had seen the Apparition, and was able to

describe it as the others had done. And all he then said concerning it he solemnly reiterated three months later when dying, and just before making his First Communion, which, in spite of his but seven years, he was allowed to do on his death-bed.

There was a sixth child on the scene, the two-year-old daughter of a shoemaker of Pontmain, Boitin by name, who, in her mother's arms, gave every sign of seeing the celestial picture in the night sky.

All the good Abbé Guérin could see was the starlit heavens, the snow-clad earth, and his little flock around him. In his humility and emotion he remained silent. Meanwhile Sister Vitaline continued to lead the way with her Rosary of the Japanese Martyrs, all the bystanders responding.

"Now there is something else!" exclaimed, as in one breath, the four children—Eugène, Joseph, Françoise, and Jeanne-Marie.

"What is it you see, dear children?" asked the priest.

They quickly described what the "something else" was. It was a red cross of from seven to eight centimètres in length, appearing instantaneously on the breast of the Apparition, and at about the place of the heart. At the same time, and as instantaneously, an oval circlet could be seen taking form and enframing the aërial figure at a distance of about fifty centimètres above the head and below the feet. The oval band seemed to be about from

ten to twelve centimètres wide, of a deeper blue than the dress, and came just within the three great stars forming the triangle.

Respecting the signs to be wrought on the piece of background enframed within the oval circlet, and respecting the play of stars, or of seeming stars, in connection with the sublime phenomenon of Pontmain, we refer the reader to fully detailed accounts of the Apparition. It may be mentioned here, however, that the three great stars forming a triangle, the topmost one of which was just above the head of the Apparition, and which were seen by all present that evening, could be seen by no one the following evening. Astronomical science can throw no light on this point. According to the calculations of Abbé Ricard, to whose pen we owe the earliest and most authenticated account of the event of Pontmain, the Apparition must have been at about six o'clock in the constellation of the Great Bear, the stars of which in no way correspond with those forming the triangle in question.

As what they saw was put forth by the children in its every detail, the majority of persons present believed, while a few seemed to take pleasure in appearing incredulous. Altercations going on in the throng, the children seemed for a moment to be forgotten.

“Look !” exclaimed Eugène Barbedette ; “she has become sad.”

The four *voyants* here testified that the smile of ineffable sweetness on the face of the Apparition

had suddenly given place to an expression of extreme sadness.

Again doubts and differences of opinion began to prevail, and the tension of mind of the little assembly became relaxed.

Here Abbé Guérin interfered. "If," said he, "it is only the children who see, it is because they are more worthy of seeing than we."

"If you were to speak to the Blessed Virgin, Monsieur le Curé," suggested Sister Marie-Edouard.

"But I do not see her," replied the priest, simply and humbly.

"If you were to tell the children to speak to her," gently persisted the nun.

"Let us pray—let us say the Rosary," was Abbé Guérin's answer.

To those present their priest's words were a command. All went on their knees excepting the two boys and the two girls, who continued erect, looking up at the sky. Probably never had the angels' salutation to Mary, fifty times repeated, proceeded from a chorus of voices under circumstances so exceptional. As the collective prayer proceeded, full of ardour and intensity, the Apparition increased in size before the eyes of the astonished children, and to such a degree that, at the end of the recitation of the five decades, bystanders learnt from the lips of the *voyants* that the figure was twice the size of Sister Vitaline.

Everything going to form this incomparable night picture had increased in size, together with the centre figure. And with this the stars had increased in numbers on the dress to the extent that the children, delighted, cried out : “ Oh, what a lot ! what a lot ! How they swarm ! She will soon be all gold.”

Prayer was resumed. Abbé Guérin gave the word of command, and Sister Marie-Edouard began intoning the *Magnificat*. The strains of the full-voiced anthem rose.

These sounds of earth were quickly answered by the luminous figure in the sky. At the end of the first verse of the *Magnificat*, the children joyfully exclaimed : “ There is something else ! ”

What they saw was as a band of white linen, about a yard wide, appearing beneath the feet of the Apparition and extending in a straight line high above the house of Augustin Guidecoq.

They described it. Then the *Magnificat* was resumed ; but only to be interrupted again and again, for letters of gold were about to appear, one by one, on that white band, and to be spelt aloud by the children as they appeared.

On seeing the first sign, the *voyants* cried out : “ It’s a stroke ! ”—then, “ It’s a letter—it’s an M ! ” The M remained alone for some seconds ; then it was followed by another letter. “ It’s an A ! ” exclaimed the little interpreters. It was a contest as to which should speak first. The A was quickly

followed by an I, and the I by an S. The word *mais* (but) was spelt out with delight and triumph. No other letter followed for some ten minutes.

The little crowd was thrilled and, at the same time, a prey to religious curiosity of the intensest kind. The children were requested to spell out the letters again and again. They were questioned and cross-questioned, and put to the test in every possible way.

Here an interruption occurred. A man of the locality happening to pass by, and not knowing what was going on, said : “ You have nothing for it but to pray, for the Prussians are at Laval.”

A woman of the throng replied : “ Were they at Pontmain we should not fear ! ”

As the singing of the *Magnificat* continued other letters appeared and were spelt out as before. As the last strains of Mary's canticle of praise died away, the following words in gold on the white band could be distinctly seen : “ *Mais priez mes enfants.* ” The *voyants* repeated them again and again. There was no punctuation ; each letter was a capital, and each from about twenty to twenty-five centimètres in length. According to the children's account, the exquisitely beautiful smile had not ceased playing on the face of the Apparition during the whole of the singing of the *Magnificat*, with the exception of a few moments when altercation had been going on in the throng below.

With this, the first line of Heaven's message to

France in her hour of need still ringing in their ears, some wept, while others prayed. Indeed, at that juncture, prayer seemed the most natural vehicle for expressing the strong emotion that was moving the little band.

The increasing coldness of the air caused César Barbedette to propose that the persons assembled should take shelter within the barn. Accordingly, the barn doors were thrown wide open and the greater number of those present went inside. The four children remained at the open doorway looking up at the sky, with the nuns and a few others round them. Something of what they saw was to be seen reflected in their faces and in their animated gestures.

On a sign from Abbé Guérin, Sister Marie-Edouard struck the first notes of the Litany of Loretto. All then sang as with one voice.

“We must beg the Blessed Virgin to make her wishes known,” had said the priest.

The Apparition in the air was not long in responding.

“Now there is something fresh,” exclaimed the children; “there’s a D—and an I—and an E—and a U.”

In this manner were slowly spelt out the letters forming the following words: “*Dieu vous exaucera en peu de temps*” (“God will soon answer your prayers”).

At the end of the last word there was a round

spot like a great full-stop in gold. These words, coming after the previous ones, formed in all one line.

When the meaning of them had made its way into the minds and hearts of those around, all were borne up and thrilled with an indescribable feeling of hope. "It is over ! it is over !" they exclaimed. "The war is over ; we shall have peace !"

"Yes ; but let us go on praying," said Eugène Barbedette.

Just before this the four had joyfully exclaimed :

"She's smiling at us ! she's smiling at us !"

Prayer was resumed. All began singing the *Inviolata*. Hardly had the first strains begun when the children cried out : "There's something else ! It's a stroke—an M."

On seeing another letter M, little Jeanne Marie Lebossé, one of the *voyants*, began thinking that the word *mais* (but) was about to be repeated. She expressed her thought, adding naïvely : "Perhaps the Blessed Virgin thinks that we did not understand it the first time."

"No, no," they exclaimed directly afterwards ; "there's an O and an N : it's *Mon* (my)."

The letters forming the word *Fils* (Son) followed. The singing of the *Inviolata* continuing, the refrain at this moment was : *O Mater alma Christi carissima*. May we not see a probably Divine coincidence between the last word on the scroll in the sky

and the words, "O sweet and beloved Mother of Christ" rising from the throng?

A pause followed. When the children had repeated again and again the words *Mon Fils*, when they had been plied with questions on all sides, there was a general outburst of emotion. "It was indeed the Blessed Virgin," said all. There could be no longer any doubt on the subject.

"Up to that time," says Joseph Barbedette later on, "the question as to whether it was the Blessed Virgin that we saw had not much troubled us; but the words *Mon Fils* dispelled all doubts on the subject.

"It is the Holy Virgin! it is the Holy Virgin!" exclaimed, with joy at heart and tears in their eyes, the simple peasants around. The same ineffable smile continued to play on the face of the Apparition, say the children.

The words *Mon Fils* commenced a fresh line of the ærial inscription. During the singing of the rest of the *Inviolata*, and also of the *Salve Regina*, fresh letters appeared one after the other.

"There's an S," exclaimed the four children; "and an E!" The word *se* (himself) was pronounced. "There's an L," they continued, "and an O."

This went on until the word *laisse* (allows) was spelt out and pronounced.

Sister Vitaline, who, though she could not see, attempted to judge, thought the children were

making a mistake in reading the words as *se laisse* (allows himself), and that these words in reality were *se lasse* (is weary). She had no doubt in her mind, as many others had at that time, in connection with the war, something of the burden of the message of La Salette, and was thinking that God might indeed be wearying of waiting for His guilty people. She therefore began correcting, as she thought, the little interpreters.

"No," they cried out together; "it's an I. It's *Mon Fils se laisse* (my Son allows himself)."

"Read it again," said the nun. "It must surely be *se lasse* (is weary)."

"But, Sister Vitaline, wait," was the rebuke that came from one of the youthful mouths; "there's more to come. There's another letter forming." "It's a T," they continued; "now there's an O." This went on until the word *toucher* (to touch) was spelt out. Then the meaning was clear to Sister Vitaline as to the rest. At the end of the singing of the *Salve Regina* the Divine message was complete: "*Mais priez mes enfants, Dieu vous exaucera en peu de temps. Mon fils se laisse toucher*" ("But pray, my children, God will soon answer your prayers. My Son allows Himself to be moved by compassion").

The last sentence was underlined by a broad gold stroke. The whole was read out again and again while the full meaning of the message was being engraved in the minds and hearts of those who

heard. Intense emotion prevailed. Joy, gratitude, and silent prayer did their part. The four children were besieged by questions. Meanwhile, the inscription was still in the sky.

After a few moments the *curé* said to Sister Marie-Edouard: "Sing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin."

The hymn chosen was a French one of sweet cadence, beginning: *Mère de l'Espérance* ("O Mother of hope"). The following strophe was sung, the nun's voice leading the others:—

" Mère de l'Espérance
Dont le nom est si doux,
Protégez la France,
Priez, priez pour nous !

Hardly was the singing resumed than the revelation in the sky was resumed also. What then took place had to be described in another way than by spelling out letters. The Apparition spoke to the children by smiles and movements. For a description of this exquisite page of the story of Pontmain, we again quote from the Rev. Joseph Barbedette. In his *Récit d'un Voyant*, in reference to this part of our subject, he says: "Up to that time the Blessed Virgin's hands had been extended towards us. She then raised them to the height of her shoulders. Her elbows were turned slightly inwards, and her hands slightly back with the palms towards us. The fact of her left arm being thus raised did not prevent us from seeing the little

red cross near her heart. She smiled as she looked at us, and that smile was more beautiful than anything I had until then seen. So beautiful was it that we could not refrain from clapping our hands and crying out in delight: 'She is smiling! she is smiling! Oh, how beautiful she is! how beautiful!'" The same witness continues: "Our emotion was contagious, for those around laughed and wept with us."

In truth, the joy and the smiles on the faces of the children looking up must have reflected to the eyes of lookers-on something of the beauty and radiance of the celestial picture in the sky.

The inscription in gold at the feet of the Apparition remained during the singing of the hymn, *Mère de l'Espérance*, but suddenly disappeared at the end.

The hymn of mournful cadence beginning, *Mon doux Jesus*, followed by order of Abbé Guérin. As this prayer in song, mournful and pathetic, and alternating with the strains of the *Parce Domine*, was to proceed from the voices below, a scene was to be enacted in the sky, comparable to which in the history of phenomena of the kind, nothing can be pointed to since the appearance of Constantine's fiery cross in the heavens.

There was a burden of penance and a plea for pardon in the words as they rose plaintive and full-voiced :—

“ Mon doux Jésus, enfin voici le temps
De pardonner à nos cœurs pénitents ;
Nous n'offenserons jamais plus
Votre bonté suprême, O doux Jésus.”

Hardly had the first strains risen when one of the four children exclaimed : “ She has become sad again ! ” They, too, became sad, their childish faces expressing extreme sadness. They were reflecting on their faces something of the sublime picture they were looking on.

“ Now there's something else ! ” was the next exclamation.

What they saw was a crucifix, the colour of blood, being held towards them by the beauteous figure in the sky, whose smiles just before had called forth their own. We will here quote again from Joseph Barbedette, O.M.I.:—

“ A red cross of about fifty centimètres long appeared suddenly in front of the Blessed Virgin, who lowered her hands to take hold of it, and then held it before her. There was upon it the figure of Jesus Christ, also red, but of a brighter hue. The head of the Crucified was neither thrown back nor thrown forward, but slightly leaning to the left. Near the top of the cross there was a second cross-bar, smaller than the one to which the arms were fastened ; it was from seven to eight centimètres wide, and white ; upon it, in capital letters of bright red, were the words : *Jesus Christ*. The Blessed Virgin clasped the cross a little below the feet of the Crucified. She held it with both hands,

these being at about the height of the waist, and the left higher than the right. The lower extremity of the cross could hardly be seen. The top of it was slightly bent forward."

The people knew that the ensanguined sign of their redemption was in the sky, bending towards them. The four children then told what they saw, the testimony of each agreeing even to minutest details. It was a supreme moment. Tears fell. The singing continued; the French refrain, *Voici le temps de pardonner à nos cœurs pénitents*, alternating with the Church's accents: *Ne in æternum irascaris nobis*.

If at Lourdes the *Parce Domine* sung by assembled thousands is sublime and sweet, on this night at Pontmain it was grand, pathetic, poignant and intense. No words could have been more suitable to the occasion than those beginning, "Spare, O Lord, Thy people," just as the proud nation of Charlemagne and of St. Louis was being humbled to the dust.

The figure that held the crucifix, and which all present by this time regarded as representing beyond a doubt the mother of the Crucified, seemed to be joining in the supplications rising from below. Her eyes, cast down, were fixed upon the cross, and the children could see her lips move as if in entreaty. Her countenance, which during the greater part of the time that the Apparition had lasted had been irradiated by the most beautiful of smiles, now wore

an expression of poignant sadness. On this subject the Rev. Joseph Barbedette says : "She shed no tears, but the sadness depicted on her face was such as to defy description. When, a few months later, my father was stricken by death, I saw my mother under the influence of an all-absorbing sorrow. It is easy to conceive the impression that such a sight was calculated to make on a child. Nevertheless, I remember that my mother's sorrow seemed to me as nothing compared with that I had seen depicted on the face of the Blessed Virgin (on the night of January 17th, 1871), the remembrance of which came naturally to my mind at that time."

The singing of the hymn, *Mon doux Jesus* and of the *Parce Domine*, was followed by that of the *Ave Maris Stella*. As the strains rose, the picture in the sky changed.

The red crucifix disappeared, and the hands that had held it, descending, resumed their former position. These were extended as if in the act of bestowing. With this the face of the heavenly visitant changed also, its look of poignant, unutterable sadness giving place to an expression of joy.

The children then saw the same smile that had so delighted them at an earlier stage.

"She's smiling ! she's smiling !" they cried in delight. Just before they had noticed and notified another change. It was that two white crosses had suddenly appeared, one on each shoulder of the

Apparition, each seeming to be about twenty centimètres in length.

When the last strains of the *Ave Maris Stella* had risen into the crisp, clear air, Abbé Guérin said: "We will now say the night prayers. If, after that, the Apparition continues, we will continue praying."

It fell to Sister Vitaline to recite these night prayers. As they proceeded the four children, with their eyes constantly fixed on the sky, saw as a white sheet or veil suddenly appear beneath the feet of the Apparition. It seemed as a roll slowly unfolding as it ascended. When it reached about the waist of the celestial figure it stopped for a few seconds. Then the upward movement continued, to stop again, this time at just below the head, and for fewer seconds than before. A last glimpse of the face with its radiant smile was vouchsafed to the four children below. Then the obliterating veil continued to unroll upward, stopping for a moment at the base of the crown. Another moment and all was over.

This complete blotting out of the picture was just as the night prayers were coming to an end.

"Is there still anything to be seen?" asked Abbé Guérin.

"No," replied the children, "it is all over."

It was about a quarter to nine o'clock.

CHAPTER II.



AT the beginning of this account we have seen the Apparition of Pontmain appearing as against two backgrounds, one of history and one of prayer.

We will resume the lines of these backgrounds, dealing first with the historic one.

As has been said, the Prussians, already in the Mayenne, were preparing to march on Laval. They were even in sight of the town, their leader, General Schmidt, having been ordered to take it. Indeed, so sure did the German general feel of success, that he had already fixed the sum to be levied on the conquered town at 3,000,000 francs.

The capital of the Mayenne, at this juncture, was not altogether without defence. The remnant of the army of Le Mans, under General Chanzy, was within it preparing to repel an attack. But while chiefs were heroic and prepared for any effort, the soldiers under them were weakened and discouraged by defeat and privation. Moreover, the town was

unprotected by forts. In short, the taking of Laval by the enemy seemed certain.

On the evening of the ever-memorable January 17th, 1871, the Commander of the Prussian forces, having taken up his quarters at the archiepiscopal palace of Le Mans, said to Mgr. Fillion, bishop of that diocese: "By this time my troops are at Laval." He was reckoning according to human foresight.

On that same evening the Prussian troops in sight of Laval stopped suddenly, and were never to take an onward step. They stopped at half-past five o'clock, about the time when the Apparition first appeared above Pontmain, a few miles off. The diary of the German staff records the fact as follows: "On the 18th, the column of Alvensleben, in the possession of about a hundred prisoners, abandoning the posts of observation at La Chapelle-Rainsouin, Soulgé-le-Bruant, and Bazougers, took up its quarters behind the Vaiges."

On this January 19th, therefore, the Retreat of the Vaiges commenced, though the surrounding country was not at once cleared of Prussian soldiery; nor did Laval feel certain of its fate until two or three days later.

It would have been as difficult for the Germans as for the French to explain this sudden change of tactics on the part of the German leader. Words attributed to General Schmidt on the occasion, and cited by each of the historians of the Apparition of

Pontmain, as well as by the *Semaine Religieuse* of Laval, have their significance. The Prussian general is reported to have said on the morning of the 18th : " We cannot go farther. Yonder, in the direction of Brittany, there is an invisible Madonna barring the way."

This sudden and inexplicable stopping of the German forces in sight of Laval, and their as inexplicable retirement the following morning, meant, together with the saving of Brittany, the turning back of the tide of conquering soldiery from that part of France. The war was practically at an end. Twelve days later the armistice was signed at Versailles.

We are not obliged to see in these facts other than coincidences—but we may be allowed to look upon these coincidences as providential.

Having limned the historic background to the Apparition at Pontmain, we will take up the still broader lines belonging to the background of prayer. We have seen how the movement of prayer for France had become more intense during the terrible month of January, and how it had become especially intense in the threatened provinces of Brittany and Maine.

At Saint-Brieux, a town not far from Pontmain, and now connected with it by more than one religious tie, on the evening of January 17th, at between five and six o'clock, a vow to Heaven was made, having for object the speedy deliverance

of France from the invader. Fervent prayer in connection with the circumstance continued until nine o'clock.

The capital was not behindhand in the crusade for forcing Heaven's hand in the national emergency. With the consent of, and even at the wish of, the Archbishop of Paris, January 17th had been fixed as the day for the beginning of a novena at the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires to obtain the cessation of hostilities. At the eleventh hour, changing his mind as to the date, Mgr. Darboy sent word to say that he wished the nine days' prayer to begin three days' later, that is on the 20th. In order not to disappoint the people, as matters had gone so far, it was arranged with the Archbishop or with one of his vicars-general that the three days preceding the 20th should be employed in a solemn *Triduum* preparatory to the novena. This *Triduum*, therefore, commenced on the evening of January 17th. On this occasion the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires was full. The priest in the pulpit was Abbé Laurent Amodru, sub-director of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. His theme, as was to be expected, was the then calamitous state of France. Numbers of those who listened to him had faces pinched through want : distress and tension of mind were the lot of all. Suddenly changing his subject, as if obeying some secret impulse, the preacher exclaimed : " We will now all implore the Blessed Virgin's assistance ;

and we will not leave this temple consecrated to her glory without having solemnly promised her a silver *ex voto*, which shall tell to future generations how on this evening, between eight and nine o'clock, a whole people, prostrate at her feet was saved, by her."

The impulse that had led the preacher to speak thus seemed to have embraced in its action those who listened. All were thrilled, carried away, and a prey to strong emotion. The project concerning the *ex voto* was responded to at once, numbers insisting on contributing towards it their mite there and then. This was when famine was more than threatening the population of Paris.

In the assembly that had listened to Abbé Amodru's words, hope had revived, and even something like joy was felt.

It was about a quarter before nine o'clock as the congregation was leaving the church. Someone in the crowd then said : " The Blessed Virgin cannot be insensible to such an act of faith as this. In a week's time we shall have peace." These words, which proved to be prophetic, expressed the thoughts of many. He to whom they were addressed was one holding an important position under government, no other than M. Martel, Contrôleur des Monnaies. This gentleman went home and at once began a letter to Abbé Laurent Amodru. He was already at the task as the clock struck nine. In the letter he penned the following passage : " We have,

thanks to you and to Notre-Dame des Victoires, waited, with a degree of calmness equalling our resignation, the hour marked by Providence for the deliverance of our unhappy country. That hour has struck this evening. Something tells me so.—
MARTEL, *Contrôleur des Monnaies.*"

He who thus wrote had never heard of Pontmain. It is probable that no one in the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires that evening had ever heard of it. Yet, just as the congregation, with new-born hope at heart, had been leaving the privileged Paris shrine, a little crowd, entranced and awe-stricken by the celestial drama at which they had been assisting, had been rising from their knees at Pontmain.

Twelve days later, and on the closing day of the novena at Notre-Dame des Victoires, according to the date fixed by Mgr. Darboy, the armistice between France and Germany was signed at Versailles.

The words "Divine coincidence," already used in the course of this narrative, find their application here. Time has brought into full light the facts just related. We may say concerning them what Pius IX. said concerning devotion to Notre-Dame des Victoires at a previous period of its history, "The finger of God is here."

Concerning the symbolic character of the Apparition of Pontmain, about which much has been written, we will draw attention to the fact of the crosses.

These, four in number, the red one and the two

white ones, and the ensanguined crucifix, as seen by the children at different moments, offer a wide field for interpretation. The Apparition on the Alpine mountain twenty-five years before had appeared to Mélanie and Maximin with a crucifix on her breast, and the prophetic message then put forth had said that the woes it predicted were as nothing compared with what would happen were France not to turn from the error of her ways. A quarter of a century later, France had not turned from the error of her ways ; her desecration of the Sunday had in no way ceased ; so that, crushed and despoiled beneath the heel of the Germans, she seemed to those with the message of La Salette in their minds to be paying a debt to retributive justice.

In short, the message of La Salette seemed to be having, in part, its fulfilment.

An impression to this effect was prevalent among the terror-stricken populations of Normandy, Brittany, Maine and Anjou, and especially after the battle of Le Mans.

“It is the secret of La Salette that is breaking upon us !” said the religious-minded peasants of La Vendée. Certain houses were marked on the outside by a cross, accompanied by the invocation : “Our Lady of La Salette, withhold your Son’s arm !”

To those whose views were coloured by such a way of thinking, it must be admitted that certain facts belonging to this period seemed to afford

reason for belief that the God of armies was punishing the French people. To cite but a single instance, from August, 1870, to the end of January, 1871, defeat after defeat happened to France on a Sunday, as if in punishment of that Sunday profanation in the past which Pius IX. had not hesitated to denounce as the French nation's mortal sin.

There is a close connection of ideas between the Apparition of Pontmain and that of La Salette.

The cross and signs of woe and penance enter into the symbolic teaching of each ; yet the leading import of the message of each differs. The *Dies iræ* by Mount Gargas seems to die upon the ear as one listens to the words of celestial hope that breathe over the world from Pontmain.

CHAPTER III.

RUMOURS of the Apparition at Pontmain quickly sped, and people began flocking to the spot from various parts. They went to see and to pray. One of the earliest visitors there was General de Charette, who, three months before, had so heroically defended the banner of the Sacred Heart on the blood-stained field of Loigny. He went in company with one or two other Pontifical Zouaves, and wrote in the visitor's book: "I believe."

Mgr. Wicart, Bishop of Laval, lost no time in appointing an Ecclesiastical Commission to enquire into the great event that was said to have taken place at Pontmain. This body began its work the following March. The four *voyants* were then subjected to the strictest examination, and with the result that in their united testimony no weak point could be discovered. The persons who had seen and heard them on the memorable evening of January 17th were also examined.

The examining body, composed entirely of

priests, was, after weighing evidence, unanimous in opinion concerning the reality of the Apparition.

The Bishop of Laval, though sharing the views of these ecclesiastics, instead of pronouncing doctrinally at once, appointed a second Ecclesiastical Commission to enquire into the same matter.

This body began its work the following November, and at the bishop's palace at Laval, instead of at Pontmain, two of its members being M. Sebaux, about to become Bishop of Angoulême, and M. Sauv  , soon to be Rector of the Catholic University of Angers.

The result of the labours of the second commission was then submitted to a third one, whose especial task was to deal with all questions to which the subject might give rise from the triple point of view of sound theology, philosophic certainty, and judicial form.

Recourse was then had to a fourth commission, one composed entirely of medical men, who, sitting at the bishop's palace and beneath the bishop's eye, were called upon to judge the matter from a purely physiological and medical point of view. The unanimous conclusion of these men of science was that the children's vision of January 17th, 1871, was to be explained by no hallucination or optical delusion, nor by any morbid state of the brain.

These children had admirably borne the ordeal to which they had been subjected. It has been said on this subject that their testimony was as a block

of granite on which no impression could be made in the way of breaking or splitting.

It was now for the Bishop of Laval to speak formally, which he did in a pastoral letter dated the following February.

But Pontmain had not waited until then in order to become a site of pilgrimage. Pilgrims had been flocking thither the previous summer, sometimes as many as a thousand at a time.

Mgr. Wicart's pastoral letter, which, with the document that followed it, was ordered to be read in all the churches and chapels of the diocese of Laval on Sunday, February 2nd, 1872, dealt with the details of the event of Pontmain and with the canonical enquiries to which that event had given rise.

Then followed the bishop's profession of faith in the Apparition. "Considering," he says, "that it shows in itself and its attendant circumstances the characteristics of a Divine and supernatural fact, we declare as follows :—

"ARTICLE I.—We consider that the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, really appeared on January 17th, 1871, to Eugène Barbedette, Joseph Barbedette, Françoise Richer, and Jeanne-Marie Lebossé in the hamlet of Pontmain. In all humility and obedience, we submit this our decision to the judgment of the Holy and Apostolic See.

"ARTICLE II.—We authorise in our diocese de-

votion to the Blessed Virgin under the title of that of *Notre-Dame d'Espérance de Pontmain*.

“ARTICLE III.—We expressly reserve to ourselves the right of approving all *formulae* of prayers and hymns and all books bearing upon the Apparition.

“ARTICLE IV.—In answer to wishes expressed to us on all sides, we have conceived the plan of erecting a sanctuary in honour of Mary on the spot above which the Apparition appeared.”

The sanctuary designated in the bishop's pastoral was to take the proportions of a magnificent church, subscriptions for which began coming in at once.

The foundation stone of the new building was laid in June, 1873, the ceremony being the occasion of religious celebrations which lasted five days.

That year—1873—saw upwards of 100,000 pilgrims and visitors to Pontmain. It saw also the death of Abbé Guérin, the much-esteemed parish priest of the favoured spot.

The spiritual direction of the parish, with its increasing requirements, then passed into the hands of four members of the congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the number of whom has increased with time, and who from then till now have never ceased carrying on an admirable apostolate for the good of souls, and for the glory of Her of whose shrine they are the zealous and devoted guardians.

Three years afterwards, Mgr. Wicart, resigning through age and infirmity his spiritual functions, was succeeded in the bishopric of Laval by Mgr. Le Hardy du Marais, who took possession of his See in October, 1876, and shortly afterwards paid a visit to Pontmain.

On the occasion of this visit, the prelate told the people gathered round him that, after the Franco-German war and the Commune, he had gone on a pilgrimage to La Salette, and that there, communing with her who, a quarter of a century before, had foretold the evils that were to befall France, he had heard, as it were, an interior voice telling him to go to Pontmain. He added that, at the time, he was far from imagining that he would ever go there in the quality of bishop of the diocese.

Mgr. Le Hardy du Marais raised the Confraternity of prayer for children, which had been established by his predecessor in connection with the fact of the Apparition, into one for persons of all ages, and gave it the title of that of *Notre-Dame d'Espérance* (Our Lady of Hope) of Pontmain.

Shortly afterwards, at the feet of the Holy Father, he obtained for the new association certain important favours, one of which was that Pius IX. almost immediately raised it to the dignity of an Archconfraternity. "There it is," said His Holiness, in reply to a remark from Mgr. Le Hardy, and pointing at the same time to a silver statue of Notre-Dame de Pontmain, which had been pre-

sented to him the year before by the diocese of Laval. "Every day," continued the Pontiff, "I pray to her whom it represents. She is my stay and my strength."

Meanwhile, the memorial church at Pontmain was growing to stately proportions, a portion of it being ready to be opened for public worship.

The solemn blessing of the new building took place June 26th, 1876.

Ten bishops, as well as other church dignitaries, took part in the ceremony.

On this occasion, Mgr. Freppel, Bishop of Angers, in the open air and before a vast multitude, preached one of his most eloquent sermons.

Taking for his text the Psalmist's words, *Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem propter inimicos tuos*, he said: "If, in the course of ages, the words of the king-prophet have had their fulfilment, they are especially being fulfilled in the times in which we live. During the last thirty years, childhood seems to be the chosen organ for Divine communications. It was to two little cow-herds in the Alps that the Mother of Mercy spoke those solemn words of warning, to which a quarter of a century of subsequent scourges and calamities serve as one of the most luminous and terrible of commentaries.

"A little less than twelve years later, in a grotto of the Pyrenees, we see the Immaculate Virgin making choice of a poor little peasant girl (Berna-



To face p. 378.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF PONTMAIN.
COMMEMORATIVE OF THE APPARITION OF 1871.

dette Soubirous) to be the instrument of one of the greatest religious movements ever known.

“ A few years later, at the darkest moment of our national calamities, here, above the spot on which we are assembled, the Queen of Heaven appeared to four little children, and through them conveyed a message to our country. Thus, three times in less than half a century, at La Salette, at Lourdes, and at Pontmain, God has been pleased to perfect praise by the mouths of infants. It is precisely this that disconcerts human wisdom. At the sight of such humble instruments chosen for such great designs, pride and false science revolt. Should not such privileges be reserved for the great ones of the earth? is asked. Alas, the vanity of human judgments! The weaker the means God employs, the more is His all-powerfulness shown forth.

“ This truth was in the apostle’s mind when he said : *‘ Infirma mundi elegit Deus ut confundat fortia. ’*

“ The marvel that took place above this spot is to me no matter for astonishment. It receives striking confirmation from events of which we are witnesses ; from the majestic building before us, which has risen to its present stage as if by magic ; from the number of pilgrims who come here from surrounding parts ; from the spiritual and temporal favours granted by Heaven to visitors at this shrine, and from the honours rendered to Notre-Dame de Pontmain after the most scrupulous examination of

the circumstances of the Apparition on the part of the diocesan authorities. These facts are so many signs showing us that we are in presence of an authentic manifestation of Divine power."

The remembrance of this week's religious rejoicings lingered long in the minds of the people of Pontmain.

Bishop Freppel, in his masterly discourse, had alluded to the favours, spiritual and temporal, which Divine mercy had granted to prayer in connection with the new shrine. This response on Heaven's part was to continue.

Before stopping to consider a few of these signal favours, we will go on tracing in its leading lines the progress of the building that was to tell in stone to future ages the history of the Apparition of 1871.

Nearly fourteen years had to pass before the church was sufficiently advanced to admit of its towers being begun. The laying of the first stones of these towers in 1891 was the occasion of another imposing religious ceremony, drawing together ecclesiastical notabilities from different parts. The towers rose tall, slender, graceful, and crowning an edifice of purest Gothic.

Five years more and we are on October 11th, 1896, another memorable date in the annals of Pontmain. That day, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apparition, was to be celebrated as a silver jubilee. Moreover, on this occasion, a peal

of twenty-five bells, one of the finest in France, belonging to the commemorative church, by this time raised to the dignity of a Roman basilica, were to receive their liturgical consecration.

The bells, decked in robes of ceremony, stood waiting. Some were in lace and some in cloth of gold. Some were named after French provinces, as the "*Normandie*," the "*Maine*," and the "*Anjou*"; and some after towns, as the "*Marseillaise*," the "*Rouennaise*," and the "*Bordelaise*." The great bell, or *bourdon*, was the "*France*."

At the ceremony of the morning, which comprised the liturgical blessing of the bells, the beautiful church was full from end to end, the scene of splendour it presented being heightened by the effect of its stained glass windows, representing the different phases of the Apparition.

When the bells had been solemnly blessed, they made their voices heard. The *bourdon* chimed *Te Deum Laudamus, te Dominum confitemur*. The "*Immaculée*" sang sweetly with her voice of metal, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Deus Sabaoth!* The "*Bretagne*," as the voice of Brittany, sang triumphantly, *Tu Rex gloriæ Christe*. The *Henriette-Odette-Marguerite*, in the name of Paris, said *Dexteram Dei sedes in gloria Patris*. And so with the remainder of the twenty-five bells and their respective tasks.

These notes, grand and sweet enough to seem a revival of the bell-music of the middle ages,

echoed through the vale of Pontmain and over the surrounding forest land of Normandy, Brittany, and Maine.

Two years later there was another important religious ceremonial at Pontmain, the occasion being the promulgation of the Papal Brief changing the title of the Archconfraternity there established, from that of Notre-Dame d'Espérance to that of Notre-Dame de la Prière (Our Lady of Prayer). The association was then enriched with fresh indulgences.

In the last year of the nineteenth century, the basilica of Pontmain, with its spires looking at a distance like lace in stone, was the scene of another important ceremony. On October 15th, 1900, its liturgical consecration took place at the hands of Mgr. Geay, Bishop of Laval, assisted by Mgr. Leroy, Bishop of Alinda, and Mgr. Meunier, Bishop of Evreux.

CHAPTER IV.

It is now time to give a few instances of that language in which Heaven converses with earth in the matter of answers to prayer. From the many such instances recorded in the archives of Notre-Dame de Pontmain, we will single out a few which seem particularly edifying and suggestive.

On September 28th, 1871, a young nun of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Evron, and belonging to the *Pensionnat St.-Etienne*, at Laval, was at Pontmain. She was known in religion as Sister Léonie, her family name being Pigeon. She was at Pontmain on the day in question with fifteen other nuns of her community. They were there on a pilgrimage with the object of obtaining the cure of an affection of the larynx, from which Sister Léonie had been suffering for four years, and which had all but deprived her of the use of her voice. During that time the religious had only been able to speak in faint whispers.

Early in the day the little group from Laval,

mingling with other pilgrims, stood gathered around the statue of Notre-Dame de Pontmain on the spot known as the *Champ de l'Apparition*. They were singing the *Ave Maris Stella*. Sister Léonie, looking up imploringly and speaking from her heart to . Her whose image was before her, murmured : " Would that I could sing ! " Obeying, as it were, an irresistible impulse, she attempted to join in the first stanza of the *Ave Maris Stella*. The attempt was useless. A second effort on her part was hardly more successful. In trying to sing the third stanza, something of her voice came forth. In the fourth, she sang in a clear pure voice : *Monstra te esse matrem*. Looking towards a sister nun she said in joyful accents, " I can sing." Then, going towards the Superioress of her community, and taking that lady's hand while the tears streamed down her cheeks, she said : " I can sing now."

The Rev. Mother, whose joy was equal to that of the young nun, could only reply : " Go on praying."

But Sister Léonie went on singing, fearing to lose her newly-regained power.

The Holy Sacrifice, which that morning was to have been offered for her in the basilica by way of supplication, was offered for her by way of thanksgiving.

There was joy in the St.-Etienne community at Laval that night on the return of the sixteen or

seventeen pilgrims, who had issued thence in the morning. At an early hour on the morrow, one of the nuns approached Sister Léonie's cell, but seemed half afraid to enter. She feared lest she might find that the joyful event of the preceding day had proved to be but a short-lived reality.

Another nun, bolder, gently opened the cell door, and said : “ *Benedicamus Domino !* ” “ *Deo Gratias !* ” in a clear, sweet, voice, was responded from within.

This case, which was published at the time in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Laval, is given in Canon Julien Bonnel's book, entitled, “ *Notre-Dame d'Espérance de Pontmain.* ”

The author just mentioned is our authority for the facts of the following interesting account. As he was journeying one day from Pontmain to Fougères in the company of M. and Madame Lecler, owners of a well-known glass manufactory in the locality, the conversation happening to turn upon Pontmain, the above-mentioned lady said, as they were passing through the burgh of Landéan : “ A woman lives here who five years ago was cured of a cancer by Notre-Dame de Pontmain.”

“ Do you know her ? ” asked the priest.

“ Perfectly well,” was the reply. “ She is a widow. Her name is Perrine Renzeau. She is a charwoman, and is now seventy-five years of age.”

The matter being thus revived, Madame Lecler

elicited further details from Perrine Renzeau and forwarded the same to Canon Bonnel.

Moreover, the curé of Landéan made a fresh investigation of the case, with the result of which also Canon Bonnel was made acquainted.

The facts thus elucidated and embodied in the interesting account, which we read in the Canon's book, are as follows :

In 1879 Perrine Renzeau had for twenty years been suffering from a cancerous wound in the right cheek, which was in a continual state of discharge. Being obliged to earn her living by charring, the poor woman had spared no pains to conceal her infirmity. The doctor, the most in repute in the locality, had assured her that her wound was incurable, and had added that, in the event of its healing, her death would be the consequence.

The Sisters of St. Joseph, to whom she had gone, as a last resource, had told her that she was suffering from cancer and that there was no hope of her cure.

In her extremity the sufferer had recourse to Heaven. She resolved to go on a pilgrimage to Pontmain, and resolved moreover to perform the journey there and back on foot and fasting, the distance being about twelve miles and a half. She at the same time promised, in the case of her prayers being answered and her cure effected, to perform the same journey under similar conditions each succeeding year as long as her strength lasted.

Accordingly, Perrine Renzeau set out for Pontmain on foot and fasting. On arriving at her destination she set to her task at once and began praying for her cure—humbly, simply and fervently. Having thus done her best to enlist Heaven in her cause, she arose and turned back to go home.

At a certain moment in her homeward journey she realised that all pain in her cheek had ceased. Her impression was at first one of fear, for she remembered the doctor's words to the effect that the healing of her wound would mean death. Feeling tired, she turned into a field, sat down by a hedge, and fell asleep.

After a while, rising refreshed and still free from pain, she resumed her journey. The first thing she did on reaching home was to examine her face by the aid of a looking glass. She at once perceived that the wound in her cheek was healed and that the excrescence connected with it had disappeared, leaving behind a slight scar only, which, by the way, on close inspection, remained visible to the end of her life. Thus was this woman, suddenly and totally, cured at the age of seventy of a tumour classed as cancerous.

Writing five years later to Canon Bonnel on this subject, the curé of Landéan said: "She is now seventy-five years of age, and has just performed her annual pilgrimage to Pontmain, on foot and fasting."

Among the many voices that proclaim their

gratitude to Notre-Dame de Pontmain, is that of a religious of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of Laval.

In the account of her cure, published in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Laval, dated April 29th, 1882, her name is not given, but, as was stated at the time, the Bishop of Laval was in possession of it, as well as of all the facts of her case. This religious, then a novice and quite young, had long been suffering from a severe gastralgie affection complicated by a cancerous abscess in the stomach. She could take no food without vomiting, and had reached that stage when her only sustenance was a few drops of liquid taken at intervals. In short, she was a living skeleton and seemed in a dying state. Her medical attendant, considering her end near, said to those around : " Watch her closely or she may pass away without your knowing it."

The sufferer displayed perfect resignation and even joy at the near prospect of death. Her own words best describe her state. She says : " I waited for death. The thought of dying, and of dying soon, thrilled me with joy. I was thankful to see my strength daily fail. From my heart I said *Fiat voluntas tua*. I had but one wish, and that was to make my religious profession. This was the favour I craved. It was to be granted me. The Superioress who brought me the coveted permission was the one who had guided my first steps in the religious life, and she was not altogether

resigned to the prospect of seeing me leave the world while still so young.

“What if we were to attempt a miracle?” she said. “The Blessed Virgin is all-powerful. Shall we begin praying for your recovery, and will you pray for it yourself?”

“My recovery would indeed be due to an intervention of Providence,” I replied. “To tell the truth, I only half acquiesced in the affectionate proposal of my superior. I ended, however, by submitting to what those around me wished, my only desire being to do God’s will.”

It should be mentioned that the leading idea in this scheme of prayer was to supplicate Heaven through the instrumentality of the Blessed Virgin, invoked as *Notre-Dame de Pontmain*.

The ceremony of the religious profession was fixed for January 17th, the anniversary day of the Apparition at Pontmain. Meanwhile, she who was so soon to be signed with the mystic sign of the spouses of Christ, and for whom *Notre-Dame de Pontmain* was being so ardently invoked, kept saying to herself: “Am I to die, or am I to get well? My God, let it be what Thou willest, and in the manner that Thou willest.”

On the morning of the profession there were two centres of prayer in connection with the event. One was the convent chapel, where nuns and novices were praying for their young sister in religion; the other was the neighbouring parish church, where

priests and people were praying with the same intention.

The ceremony of the religious profession over, she who had just given herself to Christ for ever was about to receive Him in His sacramental form. The smallest possible particle of the Sacred Host was laid on her tongue, and it was laid on with fear by reason of the vomiting that invariably accompanied every attempt on the patient's part to take food.

During the minutes that followed, the poor, frail body of her who had just received her God was undergoing a transformation. In it death was giving place to life. Shortly afterwards she asked for food, and, to the astonishment of all, ate and drank, and without ill effects.

That day at the mid-day meal she ate as well as any member of the community. In short, the state of infirmity that had led her to the brink of the grave had suddenly given place to one of sound health. Her own words on the subject are: "The hand of the Blessed Virgin had made itself felt, and had applied to my wound a salutary remedy." Her further testimony, which was published in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Laval, already alluded to, and which is also incorporated in Canon Bonnel's book, says: "My sufferings are at an end, and I have regained all my former strength. Glory be to Notre-Dame de Pontmain, to whom I owe my restoration to health."

Spiritual favours and bodily cures continuing in connection with the shrine of Pontmain, we pass over a few years and take up the case of a boy of thirteen, who had been deaf and dumb for twelve months as a consequence of an attack of meningitis. This boy, Eugène Durenne, of Saint-Berthevin-la-Tannière, in the diocese of Laval, suddenly recovered speech and hearing on a pilgrimage to Pontmain, June 17th, 1891.

In the course of the year, when he could neither hear nor speak, everything that medical skill could do for him had been done, but to no effect. The parents lost hope, but not so the boy. The young Eugène, who had heard of the Apparition at Pontmain, hoped, and from his heart was continually invoking Her who in that locality had come to be known as Our Lady of Hope (*Notre-Dame d'Espérance*).

The parents afterwards stated, in giving their deposition to the chaplains of the basilica of Pontmain respecting the case, that they had often noticed their child's pale and melancholy face become suddenly animated, and that at such times he would take a pencil and write the words: "Father—Mother, let me go to Pontmain; the Blessed Virgin will make me speak."

At length the boy's wishes were acceded to and he was taken to Pontmain. He arrived there June 7th, 1891, accompanied by his mother and sister and a servant. The little party went at once

to the basilica. There people noticed that the little lad's eyes were constantly fixed on a statue of Notre-Dame de Pontmain surrounded by lights at the entrance to the sanctuary. When asked, later on in the day, what he had then said to the Blessed Virgin, he replied: "I kept saying the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary,' and after that I said: 'Notre-Dame de Pontmain, make me hear and speak.'"

"Did you say these prayers?" was further asked.

"Yes."

"Then you could speak?"

"No."

"Then how did you say the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary'?"

"From the bottom of my heart," was the answer.

On leaving the basilica the party assisted at Mass in the little parish church. Afterwards they went over to what had been the barn, from the door of which the Apparition had been first seen, and which was then fitted up as an oratory.

There they fell on their knees and began saying a decade of the Rosary. Hardly had they time to rise and turn towards the doorway, when Eugène Derenne exclaimed: "*Maman*, I've seen the Blessed Virgin!" These were the first words he had uttered for a year. In saying he had seen the Blessed Virgin, he was alluding to the statue of

Notre-Dame de Pontain he had seen shortly before in the basilica, and the sight of which had strongly impressed him.

The mother, for answer, clasped the child to her breast. "So the Blessed Virgin has wrought a miracle," were her words as soon as she could speak. The boy spoke between smiles and tears, remaining calm the while.

The people of Pontmain were that day witness of a child deaf and dumb suddenly recovering speech and hearing.

Two months later, August 2nd, Eugène Derenne, accompanied by relatives and friends, was again at Pontmain, this time on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and in perfect possession of his faculties of speech and hearing.

M. Daniel, of Saint-Denis de Gastrines, the medical man who had attended the boy during the previous year, testified concerning his case as follows :

"I am convinced that a state of total deafness, occasioning total loss of speech and being the consequence of an illness, acute and non-nervous, and which, in the course of the preceding year, had shown no sign of giving way to medical treatment, could not, according to nature's laws, suddenly give place to a state in which the organs of hearing and speech are perfect. I have no hesitation, therefore, in considering this sudden and complete cure to partake of the character of a supernatural one."

The medical certificate from which this extract is taken was published in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Laval of August 2nd, 1891.

We will pass over seven years and single out a remarkable cure effected in the basilica of Pontmain August 15th, 1899. The case is that of Maria Vaugeois, sixteen years of age, and the daughter of poor parents.

For five or six years this girl had been suffering from a spinal affection of the worst kind. At the time of which we write, she was a cripple unable to move without crutches and unless encased in an iron apparatus. She was an inmate of the Orphanage of Saint-George de Reintembault, in the diocese of Rennes.

The testimony of the different medical men who had attended her, pointed to the conclusion that she was incurable. They had pronounced her to be suffering from *scoliosis* and from *osteomalgia*, or softening, not only of the backbone, but of the whole bony system. She had reached such a degree of helplessness that, at the end of the day when her crutches were laid aside and her metal apparatus taken off, it required two persons to raise her from the ground and put her into bed.

Owing to the apparent hopelessness of her condition, it was decided, though to the regret of the authorities, that she could no longer remain an inmate of the orphanage.

Here the poor girl pleaded to be allowed to go on

a pilgrimage to Pontmain, her hope being to obtain her cure from Heaven.

This wish of hers being acceded to, she set off for the favoured spot in company with another girl, a fellow inmate of the orphanage. The two reached their destination on the eve of the Assumption, Maria by the way having moved to pity those who saw her.

On the morrow they took part fervently in the solemn offices of the day in the basilica. By mid-day, no change having taken place in the sufferer's condition, something of disappointment was felt. They returned to the basilica about one o'clock, resolved to do violence to Heaven by way of supplication. "We must pray well, you know," said Maria's companion; "the Blessed Virgin said at Pontmain, 'But pray, my children, God will soon answer your prayers.'" When in the Church, the girl in health said between whiles to the one suffering beside her, "Pray, pray; it is by faith that you will obtain your cure."

At the end of about three-quarters of an hour, the two being still in the basilica, Maria Vaugeois was seized by a paroxysm of pain that caused her to writhe in contortions. This lasted for about ten minutes. Then, suddenly rising, and leaving her crutches behind her, she took to walking. She walked so quickly that she was out of the basilica before her companion had had time to come up with her.

“Why, one would think you were cured!” said the latter in astonishment.

“It does not need much cleverness to see that I *am* cured,” was the reply (*Il ne faut pas être malin pour voir que je suis guérie*).

Those at Pontmain who had just before seen Maria Vaugeois’ deplorable state, with a back forming in shape the letter S, were now witness of her sudden and complete restoration to health and strength. The girl had at once become agile of limb and straight of back.

She and her companion left Pontmain that evening, with the strains of the *Magnificat* ringing in their ears. They reached the orphanage at about ten o’clock. The inmates were in bed. Maria going upstairs two or three steps at a time, went at once to the directress of the establishment, and, kissing that lady, said to her: “I am cured!”

The following morning, carrying in her hand the surgical apparatus, which for months previously had encased her poor misshapen body, she went to see Dr. Brémugat of Saint-George de Reintembault. This medical man’s impression was at first one of utter astonishment, and then one of perfect conviction:

His certificate is as follows: “I saw the young Maria Vaugeois on April 6th, 1899. She was suffering from *scoliosis* in an advanced state, owing to a deviation of the bones of the spine. The *scoliosis* dated from three years back. During

those three years the patient had worn an orthopedic apparatus.

“On April 26th, 1899, I again examined Maria Vaugeois, and found that the *scoliosis* had made further progress. Another and more complicated orthopedic apparatus was then applied, but without producing any good result. The patient continued to decline. A softening of the entire bony system was going on. I, together with certain of my professional colleagues, who examined the girl after I did, were of opinion that she was incurable. I certify to having seen her on August 16th, walking upright and holding her metal corset in her hand. I then examined her and found that her backbone, instead of forming the letter S, showed no sign of deviation. I certify, moreover, that no human agency could have performed this cure, even by a course of treatment extending over several years. I therefore attribute the same to a supernatural agency.”

The testimony of Dr. Lory, of La Ferté, to the same effect is : “I certify that Maria Vaugeois was attacked, as far back as four or five years ago, by *scoliosis*, accompanied by considerable deviation of the vertebral column. I treated her, though without much success, by means of phosphates and orthopedic appliances, though, in the meantime, not considering it in the power of human science to render her backbone straight.”

On the 8th of the September following, Maria

Vaugeois went to Pontmain on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and, as testified by an eyewitness, was seen on that occasion with rosy cheeks and with a back straight as the letter I instead of crooked as the letter S.

Again at Pontmain, on the 18th of the October following, she wrote in the visitors' book there words to the effect that, just before her sudden cure in the basilica on the Feast of the Assumption, she had said from her heart and with the utmost fervour of which she was capable, St. Bernard's prayer, the *Memorare*. Another divulgation was to follow later on. It was that, just before saying this *Memorare*, she had promised the Blessed Virgin that, in the case of her cure being granted, she would consecrate herself to God in the religious life. So, seven months later, on the occasion of a beautiful statue of Notre-Dame de Pontmain being placed in a niche of the parish Church of Ferté-Macé, of the Diocese of Séez, as an *ex-voto* of gratitude for her recovery, Maria Vaugeois bade farewell to the world for ever, and entered the convent of the Poor Clares of Alençon.

CHAPTER V.

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MORE than thirty years have passed since the Apparition at Pontmain. It may not be uninteresting here to glance at those who were the four children through whose simple words the great event was given to the world. The boys, Eugène and Joseph Barbedette, now daily stand before the altar as God's ministers, one a secular priest, and the other, as has been said, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. The younger of the two little girls, Jeanne-Marie Lebossé, is a nun of the Congregation of the Holy Family. The elder one, Françoise Richer, exercises the profession of a schoolmistress.

Now, we will look at Pontmain itself, and see how it has changed in aspect from the time when we saw it a snow-clad hamlet beneath a star-lit sky on the night of the Apparition.

A new Pontmain has arisen within and around the old one, but without displacing the landmarks of the former. It comprises principally the basilica

and the community house and grounds of the Oblate Fathers. These grounds are a prominent feature in the picture. But a few years ago they were an unnoticed sylvan sweep of country, and now they present the aspect of a park-like scene, along which pilgrims wend and along which the Blessed Sacrament is borne in procession to a magnificent Calvary at the further end. There birds sing and grasses wave; magpies flit among the tall tree tops; a meandering river winds below. This river is the Futaie.

Pontmain lies enframed in an enchanting piece of landscape, interspersed by hill and dale and with extensive forest scenery for background. As has been said, the landmarks of the Pontmain of thirty years ago have not disappeared. The little old parish church is within a stone's throw of the stately religious edifice that has since arisen. It bears upon it the marks of its feudal origin, which include the armorial bearings of the former lords of Pontmain, or Pont-méen, as the word used to be written.

In the middle ages, Pontmain was a strongly-fortified town, which had grown up around the castle of its feudal lord, and constituted the most important fief of the dukedom of Maine.

Both town and castle were destroyed by the English about the year 1431. The remains of an old fortified wall of great thickness, showing here and there from out earth and ivy, and the miniature

church of the one-time lords of the place, are all that now remain of feudal Pontmain.

We must glance again at this little church, curious, quaint, and eminently suggestive as it is, having witnessed in the past the genuflexions of grim warriors and stately dames, and in the present the prayers of peasants and of peasant-saints. For it was there that the people of Pontmain, at the time of the Franco-German war, prayed for their country early and late, and often with tears, gathering round their pastor every night and every morning.

It was there that Abbé Michel Guérin, whom, on the night of the Apparition, we have seen directing his little flock, had stood at the altar daily for thirty-five years offering the Holy Sacrifice. From the beginning, his strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin had stamped itself on the spiritual life of his parishioners.

When in the early days of his ministry he consecrated his flock to the Mother of Christ, he gave expression to the following words, which, read in the light of subsequent events, seem prophetic: "We feel sure that this good and tender Mother, our patroness and advocate, under whose protection I place my parish, will intercede for us and plead our cause with God."

In truth, this much revered priest must be looked upon as one of the makers of modern Pontmain. Though many years have passed since his death,

people do not forget his grave in the pretty little Pontmain cemetery.

In this God's acre there is another grave that draws attention, but one of much more recent date. It is that of Victoire Barbedette, who lived to toil and to pray for nearly thirty years after that evening of January 17th, 1871, when, adjusting her spectacles with eager haste, she looked up into the night sky hoping to see there what her sons saw. She lived long enough and well enough to deserve to be known among her neighbours as the "saint of Pontmain," her aged cheeks retaining to the last something of the hue of a monthly rose. Priests going to see this woman with the object of strengthening and consoling her, used to come away strengthened and consoled themselves. To those who thus went she was in the habit of saying: "Talk to me of God."

At the consecration of the bells of Pontmain she was called upon to give her name to one of the peal. She died shortly afterwards, strengthened in her last moments by two priests, her sons, the little boys, Eugène and Joseph, of twenty-seven years before.

We have said that Abbé Michel Guérin must be looked upon as one of the makers of modern Pontmain.

Another of these makers is to be seen in the person of the Rev. Jean-Baptiste Lémus, O.M.I., who for eight years was Superior of the Chaplains of

the basilica of Pontmain before assuming the more onerous charge of Superior of the basilica of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre. While at Pontmain he started the publication known as the *Annales de Notre-Dame de Pontmain*. He also founded the Juniorate of Pontmain for the education of boys afterwards to become priests and Oblate Fathers.

Another of the makers of present Pontmain is the Rev. Archibald Rey, O.M.I., Superior of the Chaplains there during the closing years of the nineteenth century.

Commenting in the August number of the *Annales de Notre-Dame de Pontmain* on the sense, hidden and apparent, of the words of the Apparition, he says : " These, like all God's words, have a meaning within reach of our weak, human intellect, and another which remains inaccessible to it and belongs only to God."

This remark leads us to consider again the celestial message at Pontmain in 1871, the promise contained in which seemed to be at once fulfilled in the turning back of the German forces and the speedy ending of the war. Whatever may be the wider meaning to be put on the words read by the children on the scroll in the night sky above Pontmain, these words, by believers in the Apparition, must ever be considered as conveying a heavenly message of hope to France in one of the darkest hours of her national history.

PART VI.

Pellevoisin.

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CHAPTER I.

FRANCE was coming to herself after the war of 1870, followed by the Commune, and there was a spirit of hope abroad. God, who would not have destroyed Sodom could He have found ten just men within it, looked down and found more than ten just men in France. These just ones believed that in the vicissitudes that had lately befallen their country, there might have been Divine retribution at work, and, so believing, from their heart came a full-voiced promise of repentance and expiation. The promise found expression at once in the movement known as that of the National Vow. The first act of the National Vow was to lay on the hill of Montmartre the foundation of the church in honour of the Sacred Heart, which church was to tell to future ages the reason of its origin by the inscription on

its façade : *Sacratissimo Cordi Christi Jesu Gallia pœnitens et devota.*

The fresh impetus thus given to devotion to the Heart of Our Lord coincided with, or rather included, a fresh impetus to the pilgrimage movement throughout the country. In 1873, upwards of three million persons went to different sites of pilgrimage in France.

If to the war, the Commune, and the consequent prostration of a people, the cause, whole or partial, of this devotional outburst on the part of the best portion of French Catholics is to be attributed, it is but fair to say that the ground for the outburst had been in course of preparation long before.

In the religious revival in France in honour of the Virgin-Mother, which commenced in 1830, and which continued to be fed by such centres of spiritual life as those of Notre-Dame des Victoires, La Salette, and Lourdes, there had been a modest rill of devotion to Our Lady percolating through the great oasis. The rill had had a special work to do. Up to that time, so well had it done this work that it was possible for a writer a few years later to say concerning it that, through its action, devotion to the Heart of Jesus had made more progress in thirty years than it had previously made in two hundred. We here allude to devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart having its source at Issoudun.

With such fruitful effort under the Second Empire

on the part of this devotion, it is easy to see how the ground had been prepared for the splendid manifestation in honour of the Heart of Jesus, which took place among French Catholics immediately after the Franco-German war.

In order that the reader may see Heaven's action in the first welling forth of this rill of Marian devotion, we will look back.

In 1849, three young students of the Bourges Seminary bound themselves by a vow to the task of honouring in an especial manner the Heart of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. They received Holy Orders and went different ways. In 1854 two of them met at Issoudun as priests attached to the same church. The old idea was found germinating in the minds of both. Their scheme was to found an association of missionaries, but there were difficulties in the way, as they possessed neither money nor influence.

At length an idea occurred to them. It being close upon the time of the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, they said between themselves: "Let us make a novena to the Blessed Virgin and ask her, as the first fruits of the definition of the dogma of her Immaculate Conception, to let us know whether it be the will of God that our project be carried out."

The novena was begun. The answer came on December 8th, 1854, at the exact time when the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception was being

proclaimed in Rome. In the course of that hour, ever memorable in religious annals, because of what was going on in the capital of Christendom, one of the young priests with whom we have to do was summoned to the presbytery.

A visitor awaited him there, who said : “ *Monsieur l’Abbé*, a gentleman unknown in these parts, and who wishes to remain so, offers you 20,000 francs for the founding of some good work at Issoudun.”

“ What good work ? ” asked the priest.

“ Anyone you like,” was the answer ; “ nevertheless, an institution of missionaries would best correspond with the donor’s wish.”

The benefactor in question was Abbé de Champgrand, of Paris, priest of Saint-Sulpice.

The young priest, who had just heard what to him was joyful news, went to seek his fellow priest, and found him praying before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. “ Come quickly,” he said ; “ I have something to tell you.”

“ And I,” said the other, “ have something to tell you. The Blessed Virgin has just made me understand that our prayer is answered.”

Thus was a new work born—thus was the world to be made acquainted with a fresh form of Marian devotion, that of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart having its seat at Issoudun.

The young priest who had been summoned to the presbytery to receive the visitor, was afterwards

to be known to the world as the Rev. Père Chevalier, founder and Superior of the Congregation of Missionaries of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun.

The work, which we have just seen so evidently born of prayer, had prospered not only spiritually but materially also, to the extent that, at the time when the foundations of the Church of the National Vow were being laid at Montmartre, it could look on a splendid church of its own, already raised to the dignity of a Roman basilica, and with a hundred lamps burning before its high altar. Already its missionaries were spreading in different parts of the world under a single invocation—devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the Sacred Heart.

We purposely dwell here on this particular form of devotion to Mary, because the same seems to us to have an especial place in the great devotional movement of the time. Moreover, judging from subsequent events, it seems to us to point in the direction of a more concrete and tangible expression of its own great leading idea. Up to that time it had familiarised the Catholic world with an invocation, that of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, which embodies more perfectly than does any other the idea of Mary's empire over the heart of Jesus, and which consequently may be said to express better than does any other the spirit of the Church's teaching respecting the intercessory power of the

Blessed Virgin. The idea thus embodied and expressed was about to receive confirmation from actual events.

This brings us to the Apparitions of Pellevoisin. An association was to arise, at first a Confraternity and then an Archconfraternity, the distinctive sign of which was to be a scapular of the Sacred Heart, claiming to be of revealed origin. The association was to be enriched by indulgences. It was to spread over the world and mark its way by fruitful action with respect to souls, as well as by certain remarkable physical cures, and, twenty-four years after its coming into being, Rome was to take its scapular in hand, and canonically approve of the same as the first complete scapular of the Sacred Heart existing up to that time. And Rome, in doing this, without mentioning in its official act the name of Pellevoisin, specified 1876 as the date of this first complete scapular of the Sacred Heart coming into existence.

What was the origin of this scapular, dating from 1876, may be asked. The answer is that it was given to the world by a humble servant, Estelle Faguet, as having been revealed to her in one of the fifteen Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, with which she claimed to have been favoured.

The Church, by the voice of the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese, has not yet formally pronounced on the subject of these Apparitions, doing in this matter as she did for the space of sixty years

in the case of Sister Catherine and the "Miraculous Medal."

But from then till now she has not ceased favouring the new devotion, which was the direct and almost immediate consequence of the events at Pel-levoism in 1876.

We say advisedly that the Church has from the beginning favoured this devotion, firstly, by giving it every opportunity of proving its right to live; secondly, by showering upon it important indulgences; and lastly, by the signal act of the canonical approbation of the scapular in 1900. Two Sovereign Pontiffs, Pius IX. and Leo XIII., have in turn looked upon it and, by acts, approved. Two Archbishops of Bourges have made it their own by their influence and their protection. The first of these was Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne, who launched the association into being and who, in the autumn of the year in which he did so, standing at the door of the room of the Apparitions, by that time a chapel, and addressing the inhabitants of three parishes assembled without, thanked Heaven for having chosen the diocese of Bourges as the scene of this latest manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in France. Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne's successor, Mgr. Marchal, contented himself with allowing the new devotion a "salutary liberty," to use the words of Mgr. Servonet, the present occupant of the archiepiscopal see of Bourges. Mgr. Boyer, the next Archbishop of

Bourges, did more. He obtained from Rome the raising of the Confraternity to the dignity of an Archconfraternity, together with the granting of the important indulgences to which we have referred. At the present time, that is, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Archconfraternity numbers more than 400,000 members.

We will now look at the events in 1876, known as the Apparitions of Pellevoisin.

In treating of the facts of this portion of our narrative, we will draw considerably from a little manual entitled *Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin*, compiled by Abbé Salmon, curé of Pellevoisin, and published in 1877 with the consent of the Ordinary of Bourges. It has received the approbation of successive Archbishops of Bourges. In his letter of approbation, dated August 30th, 1895, Monseigneur Boyer, Archbishop of Bourges, says :—"This notice is destined to make more and more known the grounds on which devotion to *Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin* is based." Monseigneur Servonnet, the present occupant of the See of Bourges, says October 14th, 1897 :—"We approve and recommend the present *Opuscle* in the same terms and for the same reasons as our eminent predecessor, Cardinal Boyer." All quotations given here from Estelle's written account of the Apparitions will be taken from this little book, although it may be mentioned that the present writer has lived at Pellevoisin and been in close

intercourse with the *voyante*, with the express object of gaining from its primitive source information concerning the subject.

Pellevoisin, a small burgh in the department of the Indre, looks down from a gentle acclivity upon a magnificent sweep of country round. Its parish church of purest Gothic, dedicated to St. Martin, possesses an apse of exquisite beauty dating from the twelfth century. But it is not to this building of perfect proportions that the feet of pilgrims turn on entering Pellevoisin. These seek at once a miniature chapel with a statue of the Blessed Virgin wreathed with roses and lying at a stone's throw from the parish church. Shutting our eyes to the present, we will endeavour to see this spot as it was in the spring of 1876. Then it was a bedroom in which a woman lay to all appearance dying. The woman was Estelle Faguette. She was at that time thirty-two years of age. She had been for twelve years a servant in the family of the Comte Arthur de la Rochefoucauld, and had proved indefatigable in her duties, until a serious illness in the preceding spring had laid her low.

Her master and mistress, before leaving their country seat, the Château of Poiriers, for Paris, in January, 1876, had placed her under good attendance in a house of theirs at Pellevoisin. They had left her, as they thought, to die.

Apart from an internal tumour, from which she had been suffering for twelve years, Estelle Faguette

was, at the time of which we write, in the last stage of pulmonary consumption. Her condition was, moreover, complicated by acute peritonitis.

A Paris medical man, Dr. Bucquois, of the Rue de l'Université, had told her mistress some months before that her case was hopeless, and that she was slowly dying of consumption. In the previous December she had been given over by Dr. Bénard, of Bazançais, who had been in the habit of attending her at intervals for years. She had then received the last Sacraments.

We are on the 10th of the following February.

On the evening of that day, her ordinary medical man of Bazançais, refusing to go and see her on the ground that he could do her no good, and, when remonstrated with, saying—though not unkindly—that he had something else to do than to go on journeys with the sole object of consoling patients, Dr. Hubert, of the same town, was summoned to Pellevoisin in his stead.

This practitioner, on seeing Estelle for the first time, expressed surprise that he should have been summoned from a distance for a person who was evidently beyond the reach of his skill. Having examined her, he pronounced her lungs to be cavernous, and said, moreover, that it was useless to torture her further with medicine as she had but a few hours to live. He consented, nevertheless, to write out a prescription. On handing this to the nun in attendance, no other than Sister Marie-Théodosie,

Superior of the religious community of *Sainte-Anne de la Providence de Saumur*, located at Pellevoisin, he said : “ There are doses here for five hours ; but after the next two or three hours there will be no further need of any.”

Instead of dying that night as predicted, Estelle Faguet was to linger apparently between life and death for nine days longer, and then be the object of a cure as distinctly inexplicable, according to the known laws of nature, as is any one of the miraculous cures on record. Moreover, this cure was to be preceded and followed by circumstances which give it a place of mark among the most noteworthy phenomena of the kind.

Estelle had heard the doctor say that she had but two or three hours to live. She was perfectly resigned to die.

It may not be out of place here to glance at the past, as well as at the inner life, of this woman about to become the object of a direct intervention on the part of Providence.

Simplicity of character, a strong sense of filial duty and steadfast piety had distinguished Estelle Faguet from her youth upwards. Her parents, who were very poor, had early migrated from Champagne to Paris ; and we see Estelle, though still a child, at once taking part in the arduous task of bread-winning in the capital. By coming under the influence of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul, of the parish of St. Thomas d'Aquin, her

natural piety became fostered, and she soon joined the Association of Children of Mary.

A little later on, she showed signs of having a religious vocation. On her seventeenth birthday, with her parents' consent, hardly wrung, with an outfit, the gift of Abbé Le Rebours, then of the church of St. Thomas d'Aquin and afterwards curé of the Madeleine, she entered the noviciate of the Augustinian nuns of the Paris Hôtel-Dieu. There for three years she zealously served her apprenticeship to the religious life. At the end of that time, her health breaking down, and the fact of her sustaining a serious injury to her leg, put an obstacle in the way of her religious profession.

She left the Hôtel-Dieu walking with crutches. Shortly afterwards, owing to the good offices of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, whom she knew so well, she entered the service of the Comte and Comtesse Arthur de la Rochefoucauld, but still walking with crutches. Her leg got well in time, but her ill-health remained, taking the form of chronic peritonitis, which laid her low at intervals. Between whiles, she was able to perform, in an excellent manner, the duties of a servant, her ordinary work being that of a lady's maid. She was at that time a fair, comely young woman, with expressive blue eyes and a pleasant mouth. Possessed of good common sense and being practical in character, there was nothing of the visionary about her, and the little reading she

was able to indulge in was certainly not of the mystical kind. Her earnings went to support her aged parents, who had ended by becoming entirely dependent upon her.

When, in the summer of 1875, mortal illness had laid its grip upon her, her keenest anguish had been on her parents' account. Something of what she had felt on this subject had been committed by her to writing, the following autumn, at the Château of Poiriers near Pellevoisin, whither she had gone with the Comte and Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld. What she then wrote was in the form of a letter. Being unable to walk, she could not, as she wished to do, place the little missive beneath a stone at the foot of a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in a miniature Lourdes Grotto which had lately been erected in the château grounds ; but another person placed it there for her.

We will glance at what Estelle thus wrote in her hours of anguish. It is worth while mentioning that before this, novena after novena had been made by the same petitioner to her whom the Church calls the Help of Christians and the Consolation of the afflicted.

In the little document in question we read : " You know that I am your child and that I love you ; therefore, obtain for me, I beseech you, from your Divine Son, my restoration to health. It is for His glory that I ask it.

" Behold, my parents' sorrow ! O Mary, you know

that I am their all. If, because of my sins, I cannot be completely cured, you can at least obtain for me a little strength of body, so that I may be able to earn my living and provide for the wants of my father and mother, who, as you see, are on the eve of being obliged to beg their bread. The thought of this causes me intense suffering. Think, good Mother, of what you endured the night of our Saviour's birth, when you went from door to door asking to be taken in. Think, too, of what you suffered when Jesus was stretched on the cross. I put my trust in you, my Mother ; I know that if you wish it, your Son will cure me. He knows how much I wished to be of the number of His spouses. Deign to listen to my supplications and to intercede for me with your Divine Son. May He restore me to health, if such be His good pleasure. If not, may His holy will be done. May He at least grant me perfect resignation, and may that resignation contribute to my salvation and to that of my parents. My heart is yours, holy Virgin ; keep it always, and may it be a pledge of my love and of my gratitude for your maternal goodness."

It is in this state of resignation, which had had time to become perfected in the following weeks, that we find Estelle on that night of February, when the doctor said that she had but two or three hours to live.

Three days later, February 13th, she asked the curé of Pellevoisin to write to her mistress, the

Comtesse Arthur de la Rochefoucauld, then in Paris, and to beg that lady to have two tapers lighted for her, one at Notre-Dame des Victoires and the other in the chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, in the church of the Jesuit Fathers, Rue de Sèvres. The next day the tapers were lighted for her at the two shrines as requested.

The following night occurred the first of the series of Apparitions, which have already given Pellevoisin a place in the religious history of the time. The first five were on five successive nights.

We will recur to them in detail later on. Suffice it for the moment to say that their leading purport was to convey to Estelle Faguet the prediction of the cure of which she was about to be the object.

Each morning Estelle put Abbé Salmon, curé of Pellevoisin, who was at the same time her spiritual director, in possession of the details of her vision of the preceding night. On Thursday morning she told him that she would either be dead or restored to health on the following Saturday.

The priest at first believed the sick woman, in thus speaking, to be the victim of an illusion. He was still further of this opinion the following morning, when she informed him that she had again seen the Blessed Virgin, who had told her that she would be cured on the Saturday. His reply was : "Yesterday you told me that you were to be dead or cured on Saturday next ; to-day you tell me that you are to be cured ; what will you tell me to-morrow ?"

Evidently Abbé Salmon was sceptical, and, allowing for all kindness and consideration on his part called forth by the state of the patient, he was to remain so for a little while longer. In the meantime, so startling were the revelations he listened to, that he thought it advisable, for prudence sake, to confide these to certain persons, including the nuns of Pellevoisin. Thus, several were in possession of Estelle's statement respecting her predicted cure.

Friday night came. Those around believed the sufferer to be entering on her death agony. The priest was one of these, and left her, not expecting to find her alive the next morning.

The next morning found her not only alive but presenting in her person the realization of the predicted cure.

On entering her room at an early hour, the first words Abbé Salmon heard were: "I am cured!" (*Je suis guérie.*)

As yet, Estelle's words were the only authority for the truth she put forward. She was in bed, and her right arm still lay helpless by her side, paralyzed and swollen to double its natural size, as it had been for some days previously. The priest remained sceptical as before. He was about to say Mass at the parish church close by, and had promised to return at half-past seven to administer Holy Communion to Estelle. Before leaving, he said to her: "The Blessed Virgin can obtain your

cure if she will. As soon as you have received the Blessed Sacrament try to make the sign of the cross with your right hand. If you succeed, it will be a sign that what you say is true."

At the specified hour, Abbé Salmon came back, and Estelle communicated in presence of about a dozen persons. The priest then told her to make the sign of the cross with her right hand. She drew forth the swollen, helpless member, and, to the astonishment of all, made with it the sign of the cross. "I am cured ; I feel that I am cured !" she said. She became at once able to use her arm freely, and it was noticed directly afterwards that it had come back to its normal size.

It was found, too, about the same time, that the tumour in her side—from which she had been suffering for the previous twelve years and which had considerably increased of late—had disappeared also. But the radical cure had taken place in the night. At the exact moment when it was being effected, the sick woman had known what was taking place. All pain had suddenly ceased, the emaciated and disorganized body had received an influx of fresh life ; and the lungs which, according to two-fold medical testimony, had little of their substance left, had heard the command to become sound once more.

That day Estelle Faguet rose and dressed herself without help, laughed and talked gaily, and ate solid food with a good appetite. For weeks past she

had been able to take nothing but liquid, and that only in spoonful.

“What struck us most,” said Sister Théodosie, “was the change that took place in her appearance, her face, from being as that of a corpse, becoming at once expressive of life and health.”

To the extraordinary character of Estelle Faguette’s cure, the two doctors of Bazançais who had attended her bore witness. Dr. Bénard affirmed that it was of a nature to upset all medical prognostics. Dr. Hubert went farther, and said that it was not to be explained by natural laws. He who thus spoke was, and is, a pronounced freethinker.

In presence of this physical fact, the sudden cure of Estelle Faguette, when in the last stage of pulmonary consumption, we will pause. So complete was the cure that Estelle has never had the slightest return of the disease, and is in the possession of sound, healthy lungs at the present day. The fact we are considering, which, according to natural laws, defies explication, was at the same time the accomplishment of a prediction. The parish priest of Pellevoisin, as we have seen, knew of the prediction as it was reiterated on successive nights between February 14th and February 19th, and certain others knew of it through him, as we have also seen. On the Saturday morning, February 20th, these different persons saw with their own eyes the accomplishment of the prediction. This case is one in which hypnotism and suggestion,

even in the way of stretching an argument, can claim no part, since the foremost believers in imagination as a therapeutic agent do not claim for it the power of healing lung cavities or of instantaneously forming fresh flesh tissues. Dr. Boissarie's remarks on the well-known case of Sister Julienne, the Ursuline of Brive, apply with equal force to that of Estelle Faguet. On the question of the possible cure of pulmonary consumption in an advanced stage, this high medical authority in his *Histoire Médicale de Lourdes* says: "If, owing to modern discoveries, science succeeds in being able to ward off or to cure phthisis, the remedy found will be neither infallible nor instantaneous in its action: never will it be able to bring back suddenly to health a consumptive patient in the death-agony." The suddenness of Estelle Faguet's cure was one of its most striking features.

The sublime message at Pellevoisin commenced with the prediction of the miraculous cure, and culminated in the revelation of the scapular of the Sacred Heart, seven months later. For the moment we have to do with the first five Apparitions, those of the month of February.

On five successive nights, Estelle Faguet, according to her account, gazed upon a figure of surpassing loveliness, surrounded by a halo of soft light.

The figure appeared first at the foot of her bed. She could only see it to a little below the waist. As

she describes it, it was clad in a white flowing garment, with white girdle and white veil. The face was of indescribable beauty.

The garment, as adequately as human words can pourtray it, resembled fine white flannel. The veil, which was of a more silvery whiteness, slightly shaded the forehead of the Apparition and fell in folds over the back. As the sufferer gazed, she listened to words of consoling sweetness, which were at the same time of celestial import. Only a few of these can be given here. Among the most striking were :

“Have courage and patience.” “You will have to suffer five days longer in honour of my Son’s Five Wounds.” “On Saturday you will be either dead or restored to health.” “If my Son grants you life, I wish you to proclaim my glory.”

When the sufferer was favoured with a similar vision the next night, she was told that she would be restored to health the following Saturday.

Then, among other words which she listened to, were : “In being restored to life, do not think you will be exempt from suffering. No ; you will have to suffer. It is in that that the merit of life consists.” Then she listened to words that she was not to divulge.

It is in connection with the vision of the next night that the words : “I am all-merciful” occur.

Concerning the fifth Apparition, Estelle Faguette says : “She remained a long time silent and

motionless, standing in the midst of the soft light. She was smiling.

“When she spoke she reminded me of my promises : ‘ If you wish to serve me,’ she said, ‘ be simple and let your actions correspond with your words. Snares will be laid for you ; you will be treated as a visionary ; but pay no attention to all that. Be faithful to me and I will help you.’ ”

To quote from Estelle’s account, written immediately after her recovery and as an act of religious obedience : “ I gazed upon her for a long time. Never had I seen anything so beautiful. By degrees she vanished, till only the soft light surrounding her remained. This, too, soon faded away. I was in great pain, but I remember that I was holding my rosary in my left hand, as I had lost the use of my right. I offered my sufferings to God, not knowing that they were to be the last of my illness.”

The *voyante* tells us that almost immediately afterwards she suddenly felt quite well. She asked what o’clock it was, and was told that it was half-past twelve.

“ I felt that I was restored to health,” she says, “ with the exception of my right arm, the use of which I did not recover until I had received Holy Communion the following morning.”

CHAPTER II.

THE thread of the Apparitions, interrupted at the time of the miraculous cure, was resumed five months later. It was on July 1st, and at half-past ten o'clock at night, that Estelle again saw the celestial being of her visions of the preceding February. She was in the room in which her cure had been effected, and on her knees with a book in her hand. A shadow falling over the book was, we have heard from her own lips, the first intimation she had that the Apparition was near.

A quotation from her narrative, written the following morning in the church of Pellevoisin after she had communicated, will best give an idea of what happened. She says: "I was on my knees in front of the fireplace, when suddenly the Blessed Virgin appeared before me in the midst of a soft light. This time I saw her whole figure. She was in white. Her arms were extended, and from her hands fell what seemed like plenteous drops of rain. She looked at something fixedly; then,

taking one of the tassels of her girdle, she raised it to her breast. She crossed her hands on her breast. Then, smiling and looking at me, she said : 'Be calm, have patience. You will have trials, but I shall be near you.' The tassel she held fell from her hand. I could not speak ; I felt too happy. The Blessed Virgin stayed a little longer, and then said : 'Have courage ; I will come again.' After that she slowly disappeared."

There was another Apparition the following night. As before, Estelle was on her knees in her room. She had said the first half of an *Ave Maria*, when the radiant figure was before her. The figure was the same ; yet with this difference, that it was surrounded by a garland of multi-coloured roses outlined against the luminous background. The drops like rain seemed to be falling from the outstretched hands. In this vision, the celestial figure, crossing her hands on her breast and looking fixedly at Estelle said : "You have already proclaimed my glory. Continue to do so," she added, after a moment or two ; "my Son has also some souls especially devoted to Him. His Heart has so much love for me that He cannot refuse my requests. Through me He will touch the most hardened hearts. I have come especially for the conversion of sinners."

"While the Blessed Virgin was speaking," says Estelle, in her narrative, "I was thinking of the various ways in which she might show her power.

She replied to my thoughts by saying : ‘It will be seen later on.’ She remained with me some time longer, and then slowly disappeared. The garland of roses remained a little while after she was gone and then faded away, together with the surrounding light.”

The eighth Apparition was on the night of Monday, July 3rd, and lasted but a few minutes. The next was on September 9th, when the scapular of the Sacred Heart was revealed. It was about three o’clock in the afternoon, and Estelle was in her room on her knees saying the Rosary, when, looking up, she saw before her the beauteous figure of her preceding visions. We come now to remarkable words. “She paused,” says Estelle in her narrative, “and then said : ‘For a long time past, the treasures of my Son have been open ; let them pray.’ With this she raised what seemed to be a small square of white woollen stuff that lay on her breast, and turned it so that the other side could be distinctly seen.” The *voyante* tells us that in each of the preceding Apparitions she had noticed this square as of white woollen stuff, but without knowing what it meant. “As the Blessed Virgin held it up,” she says, “I distinctly saw upon it a red heart in relief, and the thought occurred to me that it was a scapular of the Sacred Heart. The Blessed Virgin said to me, still holding it up : ‘I love this devotion ; it is here that I shall be honoured.’”



To face p. 430.

FROM A STATUE OF OUR LADY OF PELLEVOISIN.

REVELATION OF THE SCAPULAR: NINTH APPARITION.

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The tenth Apparition was on the following Sunday at about the same time, and lasted but a few moments.

The heavenly visitant said at once : " Let them pray ; I show them the example." She then joined her hands on her breast, says Estelle, and disappeared.

In each of the succeeding Apparitions the Blessed Virgin wears the scapular.

The next Apparition was on September 15th. Respecting it, Estelle says : " With my mistress's permission, I had gone to my room to pray. It was about a quarter before three. The Blessed Virgin appeared, as usual, with arms extended and with abundant rain-drops falling, as it were, from her hands. She told me certain things that bore reference to myself alone. Afterwards, she said slowly : ' Let them pray and put their trust in me.' She looked sad as she added : ' And France, what have I not done for her ? How many warnings have I not given her, and yet she refuses to listen. I can no longer restrain my Son. France will have to suffer.' At that moment the thought occurred to me that if I were to repeat what the Blessed Virgin was saying, no one would believe me. She understood my thought, and replied : ' I have arranged everything beforehand. So much the worse for those that will not believe you ; they will see, later on, the truth of my words.' Then she slowly disappeared."

There was a second person present while Estelle

was favoured with this vision. This was Mademoiselle de Tyran, of the household of the Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld. This lady had followed the *voyante* into her room, and had seen her kneel down and begin saying the Rosary, which, by the way, she recited aloud. About five minutes afterwards the words ceased, and the kneeling figure seemed almost to have stopped breathing. Mademoiselle de Tyran's testimony is that Estelle remained thus on her knees, motionless, for about three quarters of an hour, with hands clasped, and with a forward movement of the body, as if advancing towards something; that at the end of that time she heaved a deep sigh and seemed to brush away tears; and that then, turning round to the other person present, she asked her whether she, too, had not seen the Blessed Virgin.

She afterwards described the scapular of the Sacred Heart, and gave particulars respecting her vision.

At each of the succeeding Apparitions there were other persons present.

The next Apparition occurred six weeks later, on the Feast of All Saints. To continue to quote from Estelle's narrative: "To-day I have again seen my good Heavenly Mother. She appeared, as usual, with arms extended, and wearing the scapular she had revealed to me on September 9th. As usual, too, she gazed intently at something I could not see. She did not speak,

but cast upon me a loving glance. Then she disappeared."

The next Apparition took place five days later. The following account of it was written by Estelle the same day: "At about half-past two o'clock I went to my room to say the Rosary. As soon as I had finished saying it, I saw the Blessed Virgin standing before me. She looked as beautiful as ever. As I gazed upon her, I thought of how many persons there were more deserving of her favours than myself, and who could do far more than I could to make her glory known. Looking at me and smiling, she said: 'I choose the weak and the lowly ones for my glory.' She paused again, and then added: 'Be brave; your time of trial is near.' Then, crossing her hands on her breast, she disappeared." This vision lasted nearly a quarter of an hour.

The fourteenth Apparition was on November 14th. "Yesterday," says Estelle, "I again saw my Heavenly Mother. I had finished saying the Rosary, and had just said a *Memorare*, when she appeared. Her arms were outstretched, and she wore the scapular. As on former occasions, she remained a few moments silent. When she spoke, she told me something concerning myself alone. She paused again, and then said: 'Have courage.' Then, crossing her hands on her breast, she disappeared." Five persons were present. These included three nuns of the religious community at

Pellevoisin, and Mademoiselle Thersile Salmon, sister of the parish priest. They each state that Estelle's eyes remained fixed, and that she was insensible to noise and movement. They say, too, that towards the end she sighed heavily, while great tears rolled down her cheeks. According to the testimony of these witnesses, this vision lasted forty minutes.

The fifteenth, and last Apparition, was on December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. "To-day, after High Mass," says Estelle, "I again saw the Blessed Virgin. She was encircled by a garland of roses, as in the Apparition of July 2nd. She said to me: 'Recall to mind all my words.'"

The *voyante* tells us that, at that moment, all that had been said to her in the course of the previous Apparitions became present to her memory. "She kept looking at me," she continues, in reference to the Blessed Virgin; "then she said: 'My child, remember my words. Repeat them often in order that they may strengthen and console you in your trials. You will see me no more.'"

To Estelle's reply the answer was: "I shall be near you, though unseen." Holding the scapular up with both hands, the celestial figure on whom the eyes of the *voyante* remained fixed, continued: "Go yourself to the prelate and show him the model of the scapular you have made." It must be mentioned here that Estelle had already attempted to

produce with her needle a facsimile of the square of white cloth displaying the red heart in relief, which she had seen on the breast of the Apparition.

The words that followed were : " Tell him (the prelate) that he is to help you to the utmost of his power, and that nothing will be more agreeable to me than to see this livery on each of my children, in reparation for the outrages of which my Son is the object in the Sacrament of His love. Behold the graces that I will obtain for those who wear it with confidence and who help you to make it known."

Estelle tells us that here she saw the effect, already alluded to several times in these pages, as that of abundant raindrops falling from the outstretched hands of the Blessed Virgin. She tells us also that this effect was indicative to her of the flood of graces that was to descend on mortals in connection with the wearing of the scapular. She then listened to the following words, pregnant with meaning to the Catholic mind : " These graces are from my Son. I take them from His heart. He can refuse me nothing."

" I felt that the Blessed Virgin was about to leave me," says Estelle, who continues her narrative thus : " ' Courage,' she said, gently ascending the while. ' Should he (the prelate) not be able to grant you what you ask, and should difficulties arise, you will go farther. Fear nothing ; I will help you.' She went half-way round my room and

disappeared at a short distance from my bed." As has been already intimated, there are minor details in connection with the Apparitions which we have not attempted to give here, our aim having been to reproduce the phenomena in their leading lines only. Fifteen persons were present at the last Apparition. These included Abbé Salmon and the Comtesse Arthur de la Rochefoucauld, who is now living the life of a Dominican tertiary in the convent she has founded on the site of, and in commemoration of, the facts with which we have to do. We heard from this lady's lips, in the summer of 1900, that her object in founding this convent was that the Church's liturgical voice might never cease on the spot where the events we are recording had taken place.

The testimony of these witnesses coincides in the most perfect manner with what, according to Estelle, took place in the course of the last Apparition. During the quarter of an hour that the vision lasted, the *voyante*, whether on her knees or standing, was insensible to external sights and sounds. Towards the end she was seen to turn her head slowly in a certain direction, and seemed to be following, with an intense fixity of expression, something that was moving. This, as was afterwards learnt, was when the Apparition was making half the semi-circuit of the room before disappearing at the foot of the bed, from which Estelle had risen to life and health, nearly ten months before.

It was naturally supposed that the prelate alluded to in the last Apparition could be no other than the archbishop of the diocese, Charles-Amable Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, who then filled the archiepiscopal See of Bourges, and who, because of his piety and enlightenment, had come to be called the "angel of the diocese."

This prelate had been watching from a distance what had been going on at Pellevoisin, and although he had abstained from actual interference, his attitude had been one of extreme prudence. He had even written to the curé of Pellevoisin advising him to be cautious in the matter of the scapulars. But, when he heard the particulars of the last Apparition, with certain startling details concerning himself, he consented to receive Estelle at once. In short, he not only received her at his archiepiscopal palace of Bourges, but retained her by him two days examining and cross-examining her. The result of the examination was such as to induce him to write at once to the curé of Pellevoisin, not with the object this time of advising the priest to be cautious in the matter of the scapulars, but, on the contrary, to tell him to get as many of these made as possible and in as short a time as possible. He then appointed an ecclesiastical commission to enquire into the events that had lately taken place at Pellevoisin.

The commission, which was composed of the most prominent ecclesiastics of the diocese, had at

its head Abbé Sautereau, first vicar-general of Bourges.

We will consider for a few moments the bearing of the message at Pellevoisin—a message which is complete in itself, and which receives fresh import by being read in the light of the other great Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in France since 1830. What is to be thought of the words, sublime and full of theological meaning, of which it is composed? Let our answer be in the words of Abbé Paul Bauron, curé of the Church of Saint-Eucher, Lyons, who, twenty-four years after the Apparitions, speaking at the Marian Congress held at Lyons in September, 1900, said: “The Blessed Virgin’s words at Pellevoisin are not only remarkable in themselves, but are of the profoundest theological significance. They thus serve as an intrinsic proof of the truth of the Apparitions.”

The message at Pellevoisin bears no earthly stamp, and the same may be said of the portrait given in the few words with which the *voyante* describes the being of her visions. These few words present us with a clearly-cut picture of a heavenly reality. As in the case of Bernadette and the Lourdes Madonna, so here we have before us a type of beauty, ideal, distinct and remaining the same in each of the Apparitions. Bernadette and Estelle, the child and the woman, untutored and ignorant of everything but the sublime realities which they saw, alike give us in a few crisp lines

material for a portrait more beautiful in conception and more theologically significant than anything that has come to us from the brush or chisel of the greatest artists.

But human art does not rise to the task of portraying heavenly realities. So it is as easy to understand Bernadette Soubirous' disappointment on first seeing Tabisch's statue of our Lady of Lourdes as the Immaculate Conception, as it is easy to understand Estelle Faguet's words to the effect that the much-admired statue of the "Mother-all-Merciful," at Pellevoisin, is but as a figure in a masquerade compared with the surpassing reality of her visions.

CHAPTER III.

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TO return to the ecclesiastical commission which opened at Pellevoisin in January, 1877. The result of the enquiries of this body was such as to leave no doubt in the minds of the majority of those who took part in the deliberations, that the events under consideration were of a distinctly supernatural character. Out of fifty-six ecclesiastics assembled, the voices of fifty-five were unanimous to this effect, one alone refrained from giving an opinion.

Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne forebore pronouncing a doctrinal decision on the subject at once, refraining in this matter, as Mgr. Brouillard, Bishop of Grenoble, had refrained for five years in the matter of La Salette, and as Mgr. Laurence had done for four years in the case of Lourdes. The Archbishop of Bourges told Abbé Salmon at the time that a doctrinal decision favourable to the events at Pellevoisin, pronounced at once, would, in his opinion, follow too closely upon the events themselves. Within two years from that time, Charles-Amable

Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, had gone to his reward.

But if the prelate did not speak at once with the weight of ecclesiastical authority, he was prepared to act in another manner. Being in Rome the year following that of the Apparitions, he laid before the Roman Congregations, charged with the consideration of such matters, a detailed account of the events of which Pellevoisin had been the scene. The Congregations proved favourable to the cause represented by the Archbishop; Pius IX. was no less so. In blessing the prelate, the Pope especially blessed the work in which Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne was about to engage. This work was the foundation of a confraternity at Pellevoisin, in consequence of the events that had taken place there the previous year. Already a number of the faithful were asking for an association of the kind; already, since Estelle Faguet's visions, a marked increase of devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin had radiated from Pellevoisin through the country round; and already, the newly revealed scapular had had time to spread considerably.

On his return to his diocese, the Archbishop of Bourges founded the Confraternity of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, drawing up the statutes for it as they now exist, and placing it under the invocation of the "Mother-all-Merciful," according to the words of one of the Apparitions: "Je suis toute miséricor-

dieuse." In conformity with the statutes of the new association, each member was expected to wear the scapular of the Sacred Heart according to the model presented by the *voyante* to Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne as having been revealed to her in the ninth Apparition. This scapular consists of two squares of white flannel, some four inches long by three wide, one displaying a red heart in relief with certain insignia of the passion, and the other, the figure of the Blessed Virgin, according to Estelle Faguet's visions.

On the 9th of the following September, the first anniversary of the revelation of the scapular, Abbé Sautereau, representing on the occasion Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne, solemnly blessed the room at Pellevoisin in which the Apparitions had taken place, and then celebrated the Holy Sacrifice within it. On the same day, the statue of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, the "Mother-all-Merciful," was carried in triumph through the burgh, followed by the inhabitants and a number of priests.

Mgr. Chigi, the Papal Legate in France at the time, was one of the first to become a member of the new Confraternity and to wear the scapular.

The association, for the manner in which it had spread, may be likened to the grain of mustard seed of the Gospel. It quickly made its way into America and Oceania. The Marist Fathers have, from the first, been among its foremost promoters. Certain prominent Jesuits have also worked in the

same direction. The Rev. Michel Fessard, S.J., who died a few years ago in the odour of sanctity, was one of these. Another well-known Jesuit, the Rev. Father Pichon, is doing wonders in spreading devotion to Our Lady of Pellevoisin in Canada. So also are a number of members of the Congregation of the Clercs de St. Victor, who, scapular in hand, go readily to the task of making converts in the new world.

Those who evangelize at home and abroad by means of this ensign of the Sacred Heart may say with truth, "We have found a vein of gold in the Church of God," thus borrowing words used by Father Faber, of the Oratory, half a century ago in reference to his Confraternity of the Precious Blood.

Leo XIII., following in the footsteps of his predecessor, has given repeated proofs of his approval of the devotion inaugurated at Pellevoisin in 1877. On different occasions during his episcopal jubilee he blessed the scapular in presence of the representatives of Catholic France. Each year he sends his blessing to the pilgrims assembled at Pellevoisin on September 9th. In April, 1892, he presented the sanctuary of Pellevoisin with a magnificent candle, which had his arms engraven thereon, and which he had received the preceding Candlemas from the White Fathers in Rome in the name of Cardinal Lavigerie.

In the December of the same year, by virtue of

a Brief, his Holiness granted indulgences, plenary and partial, to all who take part in the annual pilgrimage. In 1896 he raised the Confraternity to an Archconfraternity with power of affiliating to itself other confraternities of the same name in France. The Papal Brief granting this privilege commences : " Following in the steps of our predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, we are accustomed to raise and to enrich with especial privileges and titles of honour, pious associations of the faithful, in order that these may develop in the Lord, when by holy bishops our attention is favourably drawn to such as being able to benefit abundantly the Christian community. Among such associations, we think with justice and right, according to the forcible testimony of the Archbishop of Bourges, should be numbered the Confraternity canonically established in his diocese under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother-all-Merciful, in the parish church of the locality commonly called Pellevoisin."

This Brief was followed by another, dated three days later, granting ten plenary indulgences in the year, for a period of ten years, to members throughout the world of the Archconfraternity just erected.

The days for gaining these indulgences were left to the choice of the Archbishop of Bourges. Mgr. Boyer accordingly selected the day of putting on the scapular for the first time, February 14th, February 19th, the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, the

Feast of the Sacred Heart, July 2nd, September 9th, September 15th, November 1st, and December 8th. It is worthy of notice that, with the exception of the feasts of *Corpus Christi* and of the Sacred Heart, and of the day of first putting on the scapular, the other seven days chosen were the anniversaries of the most important of the Apparitions. This fact is of value to apologists of the devotion.

In August of the same year, Leo XIII. attached an indulgence of two hundred days to the prayer to Our Lady of Pellevoisin, which prayer is based on some of the leading facts of the Apparitions. The prayer is as follows: "O Mother-all-Merciful, thou comest to us with hands extended and laden with graces, in order to draw us to thyself and overwhelm us with thy favours. We therefore hasten to the odour of thy perfumes sweeter far than that of roses. Cover our eyes with the veil of modesty, gird us with the girdle of purity and penance, bind us to thy service by the links of a faithful love, and lay upon our hearts the sacred image of the Heart of thy Divine Son. May this image be the pledge of thy most powerful protection until the moment when we go to rest for ever in the bosom of God."

CHAPTER IV.

SINCE the miraculous restoration to health of Estelle Faguet, there have been other remarkable cures at Pellevoisin, as well as elsewhere, in connection with the devotion of which Pellevoisin is the centre.

From the already lengthy list we will choose a few.

One of the earliest, as it is one of the most striking, is that of Sister Louise-Marie de la Croix, *tourière* of the Carmelite Convent of Blois. This religious had been a great sufferer for thirty-three years. Her condition had become worse with time, and by medical men, including her ordinary medical attendant, Dr. Aubry, of Blois, had long been considered hopeless. She had gone on pilgrimage after pilgrimage to various shrines, including that of Pellevoisin, but with no result as far as her health was concerned. It is true that on these occasions she had not asked for her restoration to health, preferring, as she tells us, to remain in her

state of suffering, in the case of that state being more acceptable to God. All she had asked for herself had been strength to bear her sufferings.

These sufferings in their physical aspect took the form, for the most part, of swelling of the legs and of acute pains in the head and in the region of the heart. She was often compelled to keep her bed for months together. In fact, towards the end the greater part of her time was spent in bed. During these periods of prostration her state rendered frequent communion in her case impossible. How she suffered from this spiritual privation may be gathered from her own words: "To be debarred from receiving my God was to me a source of far keener suffering than anything else I had to endure."

Early in September, 1880, we find her preparing to pay another visit to Pellevoisin. She had begun a novena, which was to end on the 8th, at the shrine of the Mother-all-Merciful. A fresh chaplain, in the person of Abbé Prévile, having recently been appointed to the Carmelite Convent of Blois, this priest asked Sister Louise-Marie if she was going to Pellevoisin with the object of obtaining her cure. The nun replied in the negative, adding that the sole aim of her pilgrimage was to obtain strength to bear her sufferings.

The chaplain then gave her to understand that he was not a believer in the Apparitions of Pellevoisin, but advised her, nevertheless, or rather, in a spiritual

sense, ordered her, to go and ask for her cure at the new shrine, and to ask it, moreover, as a sign that the Blessed Virgin had really appeared on the spot ; adding that, were that cure to be granted, he, too, would become a believer in Pellevoisin and would go there on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving.

The sufferer obeyed, according to the spirit of the command laid upon her. At Pellevoisin, on September 8th, the day on which her novena ended, she contented herself with laying before her, whom she was invoking as the Mother-all-Merciful, the wishes and intentions in her respect of her spiritual director.

Heaven's answer came at once. After having received her God in His Eucharistic form, the almost life-long sufferer rose a sound woman. Her cure was complete and all-convincing. It has been lasting. Never from that day to this has Sister Louise-Marie experienced the slightest return of the terrible infirmities from which she had suffered for thirty-three years. A marble *ex voto* in the chapel of the Apparitions records her cure.

Dr. Aubry, of Blois, in reference to this case, was heard to say more than once in the hearing of members of the Carmelite community : " Sister Louise's cure surpasses me. Humanly speaking, that cure was impossible." To the good Sister herself he said : " You owe a debt of gratitude to the Blessed Virgin, for neither I nor anyone else could have cured you."

In September, 1902, we met at Pellevoisin this privileged person, and heard from her lips the account of her cure in 1880.

Six years after this cure, the humble Carmelite *tourière* who had been the object of it was brought face to face at Pellevoisin with another marvellous cure in the person of her niece, Madame Rongeaux, of St. Dié. This person had been a great sufferer from rheumatism, affecting particularly the heart and one leg, and had been reduced by it to the state of a helpless cripple walking with a crutch. She says that for a year her sufferings had been incessant, and that medical aid had brought her no relief.

In September, 1886, she went to Pellevoisin in the hope of obtaining her cure. It was September 9th, the day of the annual pilgrimage, and some thousands of persons were gathered together there. Madame Rongeaux was assisting at High Mass in the parish church of Pellevoisin, which was full, when suddenly, at the moment of the elevation, a sense of interior conviction told her that the cure she was asking for with such intensity of faith and hope was granted. In truth, from that moment she was to experience no more rheumatic pains in heart or leg. She left her crutch at the shrine of Pellevoisin. Her aunt, Sister Louise-Marie de la Croix, a witness, as has been said, of this cure, and communicating with us on the subject in September, 1902, testifies that Madame Rongeaux has

never in the intervening years had the slightest return of the rheumatic affection of which she was suddenly cured at Pellevoisin in 1886.

Another interesting case is that of Lucie Noirot, a hard-working mother of a family living in Paris. We find this woman, in the spring of 1891, though still comparatively young, reduced to the last extremity. She had been ill for the preceding five years, suffering from different diseases, including two internal tumours. She had been twice an inmate of the Lariboisière Hospital, remaining there two months each time, but without deriving any benefit. While there she had been attended by Doctors Berger and Perrier, and had been found to be suffering not only from the internal tumours already mentioned, but from a suppurating salpingitis besides. The doctors had refused to operate upon her.

In April, 1891, she put herself under the care of Dr. Péan, of the Saint-Louis Hospital, the first specialist in France for diseases of the kind from which she was suffering. The eminent surgeon's diagnosis of her case was exactly the same as that of the doctors of the Lariboisière Hospital had been. While under treatment at the Saint-Louis Hospital, she was twice taken to the operating-room, and twice sent back, as not being in a state to be operated upon. On the last occasion, Dr. Péan told her plainly that she was too ill to undergo the operation in question, that this operation would

be attended with considerable danger, and that her case was not only an exceedingly critical one, but also an exceedingly interesting one to science. He, moreover, told her that he wished to take it in hand himself, and to operate upon her at a private clinique of his own a little later on.

The great Paris doctor then went out of town for some weeks.

In the meantime, Lucie Noirot, unable to sleep, at times unable to move, subject to constant vomiting, and suffering continually, felt herself to be given over by science. Young children were around her, and she was almost destitute. In this emergency, coming in contact with persons who spoke to her of the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes, for which preparatious were then being made, hope revived within her, and she, too, wished to go to Lourdes. Her request, however, to join the necessitous sick of the National Pilgrimage, was sent in too late that year, and she was told that she would have to wait until the following summer. She was resolved not to wait in this her attempt to obtain her cure direct from Heaven. She says naïvely in her account that the Blessed Virgin intended to cure her that year, and so brought her in contact with some one who spoke to her of a pilgrimage to Pellevoisin, preparations for which were then being made.

The name of the site of pilgrimage was not quite unknown to her, since she admits having been

struck some time before by the beauty of the statue of the Mother-all-Merciful in the basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, and says that afterwards she had invoked the Blessed Virgin under that title. It may here be mentioned that this statue was the first one of the Blessed Virgin to make its way into the Church of the National Vow.

In short, Lucie Noirot joined the annual pilgrimage to Pellevoisin, and left Paris on September 7th with the other pilgrims, taking with her a medical certificate as to her state, signed by one of the doctors of the Saint-Louis Hospital.

On arriving at Pellevoisin, her first act was to pray for a few minutes at the shrine of the Mother-all-Merciful. Then she went to bed. Contrary to her habit, she closed her eyes in peace and slept, to awake a little later free from pain and with an indefinable impression that her infirmities were at an end. She awoke those around her to tell them of this her joyful conviction.

The following morning, with something of weakness still about her, and perhaps fearing lest her impression of the previous night might have been a delusion, she went to the Chapel of the Apparitions and there prayed long and fervently.

Kneeling before the statue of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, the following words, coming from her heart, went to form her prayer: "Do not, good Mother, let me go away from here without being cured. You know that I have young children. What will

become of them if I die? Send me other sufferings if you will, but, oh! cure me now, and the rest of my life shall be spent in helping to make you better known."

"The Blessed Virgin heard me," says the suppliant, "for, from that hour, I experienced no further suffering; and the doctor on examining me when I came back to Paris, could discover no trace of my former diseases." This was true. Whether the radical cure had taken place in the night time, or whether it took place the following morning at the shrine, it would be difficult to say. Certain it is that Lucie Noirot became at once a sound woman, that she returned home in good health, and that after undergoing a strict medical examination, no sign of the complicated state of disease that had been so near bringing her to the grave, could be detected. She was able to begin work at once.

More than ten years have passed. Face to face with this person recently, in her humble Paris lodging, 10, Place Danecourt, Montmartre, and seeing her full of life and vigour, we heard from her lips words to the following effect: "Not for the wealth of the world would I forego my conviction that my cure was miraculous, and that it was brought about by the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, invoked as Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin."

The case of a nun, Sister Adelaide, of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of Baz-

ançais, deserves dwelling on as presenting more than one interesting feature.

In June 1886, this religious was declared by a medical man of Clermont, to be suffering from a cancerous tumour in the breast, and an immediate operation was deemed necessary, the doctor saying that a substance as big as his fist would have to be extracted.

Matters had gone so far, with respect to the operation, that a room in the hospital of Clermont had been engaged for the purpose by Sister Adelaide's superiors, and even the medical fees had been agreed upon.

In the meantime, Sister Adelaide refused to be operated upon. As soon as she heard her doom pronounced by medical science, she turned all her thoughts heavenward and began invoking incessantly the Blessed Virgin, as Our Lady of Pellevoisin, to save her from the doctor's hands. This went on for a month. At the end of that time, we find her at Orleans with her superiors awaiting another medical examination, which took place July 17th. Two medical men, a physician and a surgeon, were then called in to pronounce upon the case. These did so by saying that an operation would be useless, and by giving to understand that the sufferer had but about five weeks more to live. They added that, in the case of the operation proving successful, the cancer would certainly come again.

On this, Sister Adelaïde was removed to the mother-house of the congregation, as it was thought, to die. Before the end of the month she was ordered to Pellevoisin, with the object of trying to obtain her cure there by prayer. She gladly obeyed, since she had not ceased invoking to this effect the Blessed Virgin as Our Lady of Pellevoisin, since her first condemnation by medical science in the previous June.

The answer from Heaven did not come at once, but four months later, when Sister Adelaïde paid a second visit to Pellevoisin with the same object. This was on September 3rd. Then, suddenly, the cure was effected. The nun, on this subject, says : "I knew that I was cured, my strength suddenly came back, and I experienced a great sense of joy." Such were her personal impressions. The bare physical fact of the case was that, then and there, the cancerous tumour disappeared, leaving behind it no trace. Sister Adelaïde continues : "Great was the emotion of my fellow religious on seeing, not only that the tumour had disappeared, but that it had done so without leaving the slightest scar." The affected part, which had now regained its natural form and appearance, had previously presented the aspect of a huge double tumour, repulsive to look at, and continually discharging in different places.

Sister Adelaïde was at the time fifty years of age. In a letter which we received from her, dated

November 9th, 1898, she says : “ It is now more than twelve years since I was the object of this cure, and I have never since experienced the slightest pain or inconvenience in the part that had been so terribly affected.” She says moreover : “ While dreading the operation on the part of doctors, I had never ceased asking the Blessed Virgin to take the matter in hand for me herself.”

CHAPTER V.

WE have been looking at Pellevoisin as it stands in the matter of physical cures in relation to other great shrines and sites of pilgrimage. We will now look at it in a domain which seems to be more especially its own, namely, that of dealing with persons considered to be suffering from demoniacal possession. The bare idea of such possession may bring a smile to the lips of the present-day reader, Catholic though he be. Yet theologians now, as in the past, are by no means inclined to deny the existence of devil-possessed persons. There are curious maladies abroad for which medical science can find no name, but which it classes with more or less fitness under the heads of hysteria and neurosis. When, on those who are the victims of such diseases, the Church allows exorcism to be applied, we may be sure of the nature of the evil that is more than suspected. Victims of maladies of this kind are not so rare as might be at first supposed.

At the present time the dioceses of Blois, Tours,

and Angers can each point to what is considered a devil-possessed person in its midst, on whom the Church's exorcisms are being vigorously applied. More than this, were M. de Haza, S.J., an official exorcist for the diocese of Paris, to be consulted, and were he to answer confidentially, he might tell us that now, in the spring of the year 1903, he has sixteen persons on hand whom it is his task to exorcise.

We will see what Pellevoisin has to say on this subject. One of the remarkable cures it can point to in this direction is that of Françoise Millet, the daughter of peasant parents living at Carmagne, not far from Bourges.

In 1882, Françoise, a little girl of twelve, was suffering from a form of disease which the doctors of the locality were at a loss even to understand. The child was daily subject to attacks, which in no way resembled those of epilepsy, and which would sometimes last for hours together. At such times she would writhe in contortions.

At such times, too, she knew how to bark like a dog, to mew like a cat, and to crow like a cock. The sight of sacred objects had the effect of sending her into paroxysms of rage. She possessed the power of second sight to a remarkable degree. According to the testimony of persons concerned in her case, she often had knowledge of things that were going on at a distance, as well as intuition of events that were to happen.

The doctor's advice to the parents was to put the child in a madhouse, and the advice might have been acted upon but for the timely interference of the Rev. Father Jean-Joseph, of the Franciscan convent of Bourges.

This religious, having heard of the little Françoise, expressed a wish to see her. On seeing her, he at once believed himself to be in presence of a case of devil-possession. He said to the parents : "Take her to Pellevoisin, and, should it be that she is tormented by the devil, the Blessed Virgin will deliver her."

Accordingly, the parents took their child the following Thursday to Pellevosin. There, the next day, in the Chapel of the Apparitions, a Mass was celebrated for the little devil-possessed girl, as she was called. Françoise was present at it. Immediately afterwards she said to Abbé Salmon, the parish priest : "While you were saying Mass, the Blessed Virgin said to me : 'My child, you will be cured on Sunday next at eleven o'clock.'"

"Child," said the priest, "how did you hear these words? Was it with your ears?"

"No, sir, it was with my heart. Within me I heard a clear gentle voice say : 'My child, you will be cured on Sunday next at eleven o'clock.'"

The priest was the more impressed by what he heard, since he knew that the child's words perfectly agreed with the teachings of mystical theology, which tell us that words can be con-

veyed to the inner sense otherwise than by the ears.

Françoise Millet returned home, and was worse than usual the following day.

By the much-awaited-for hour of eleven on Sunday morning there was no improvement in her condition.

The parents began to look upon the predicted cure as an illusion. It did not occur to them that before Sunday was at an end the clock had again to strike the hour of eleven. At nine o'clock the family went to bed as usual, Françoise going to her little room alone.

The child fell into a deep sleep. At eleven o'clock she awoke. To use her own words : "Just as the train was passing, and it passes at eleven, I was awakened by two little taps on my side. I was not at all afraid. I then heard in my heart, in the same way as at Pellevoisin, the words spoken very softly and distinctly : 'My child, you will have no more attacks ; but you will suffer from headaches and sickness until you come and see me again.'"

From that hour the terrible fits, of which she had had at least two daily for more than a year, ceased completely ; but she began to be troubled with headache and sickness. This continued until her second visit to Pellevoisin. Then every sign of ailment and suffering disappeared, and Françoise Millet returned home perfectly well. The cure is

attested by a marble *ex voto* in the chapel of the Apparitions.

The following year, on September 9th, the little girl and her parents were at Pellevoisin on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving. Amid the number of persons assembled there for the annual pilgrimage was a young woman of twenty-five, suffering much in the same way as Françoise Millet had suffered. These two were brought together. The child delivered was made to kneel beside the woman still in torture and to pray for her deliverance. This took place in the Chapel of the Apparitions, which was at the time crowded.

The young woman, Marie Saboureau by name, was suffering from a malady for which doctors could find no name, but which priests did not hesitate to call possession by the devil. She was the daughter of peasant parents, and a native of Rivesaltes in the *Pyrénées Orientales*. At the time of which we write, she was at Pellevoisin under the care of a lady, Madame Gabaudan, of the town of Lunel, who was accompanied by her son. It is to this gentleman that we owe the interesting details on the subject that have been published in the form of a booklet at Montreal, under the title of *Histoire d'une possédée guérie par Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin*.

M. Gabaudan was not only a witness of, but an actor in, some of the scenes he describes. Moreover, his testimony is corroborated by that of others

who were witnesses at Pellevoisin of the different phases of this most curious case. Among these may be mentioned Abbé Salmon, curé of Pellevoisin, and the Rev. O. Leborgne, S.M., of the Institution Saint-Vincent at Senlis.

Marie Saboureau had from her youth been pious and strictly virtuous. Apart from those times when she seemed to lookers-on to be possessed by evil spirits and to be serving as their mouth-piece, she was in every respect an exemplary Catholic. At times she would say : " He may possess my body, but he shall never possess my soul." In her moments of reputed devil-possession, and these were many, she would sometimes roll in mad contortions, sometimes roar and bellow like wild animals, and almost always go into a state bordering on frenzy at the sight of sacred objects. At such times startling revelations would come from her lips, and though only an ignorant peasant girl, she would show an intimate acquaintance with the Latin tongue.

When we find her at Pellevoisin on September 9th, 1883, she had already been there three weeks. Among the scenes of Satanic significance enacted by her during that time, there is one that deserves mention. She was in the Chapel of the Apparitions with a few persons, including the curé of Pellevoisin. Rising suddenly, she exclaimed : " Give me water ! I thirst ! I burn !" Her eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets, while her wide-

open mouth allowed full view of a swollen tongue and palate. Writhing in rage, she again cried out : " Give me water ! I thirst ! I burn ! "

Abbé Salmon moistened her lips with a few drops of holy water.

" Give me water ! I thirst ! I burn ! " she continued. Then, turning towards M. Gabaudan, she said : " Give me to drink ; I burn ! " Here she fell her full length on the ground in contortions.

Another significant feature was Marie Saboureau's persistent refusal to perform the slightest act of homage in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On one occasion, seven persons together could hardly succeed in making her bend the knee before the tabernacle. Once, when such an attempt was being made, she was heard to say : " For me, no hope, no throne, no glory. " In presence of this scene, the words of the devil-possessed of the Gospel come instinctively to the mind : " What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God ! "

In certain of her performances, the girl would move forward on her back with a zigzag movement without the slightest action on the part of hands or feet, and giving forth at the same time a hissing sound like that of a serpent. At such times, she would climb the altar rails and get to the other side as a real serpent might have done.

At the time of the annual pilgrimage, different

priests applied the Church's Liturgical prayers to Marie Saboureau's case, but with no other result than that of eliciting still further proofs that they had to do not only with an undoubted, but with also a very remarkable instance of demoniacal possession. One of the priests who thus employed his efforts in contending with the unseen enemy, that was supposed to be acting and speaking in the young woman's body, was the Rev. Father Feuillet, of the Order of St. Dominick. The knowledge of the Latin tongue evinced by the girl on these occasions was simply astounding. She was ready at once with a reply to each of the Liturgical adjurations. More than one night was spent in prayer at Pellevoisin by those trying to obtain her deliverance.

We now come to the last act of the drama. On the evening of September 15th, the tormented one was in the Chapel of the Apparitions with a certain number of persons, including the curé of Pellevoisin and others, who had been carefully watching her case. To those experienced in such matters, there were signs that the deliverance was at hand. In the meantime, prayer for her did not cease. For three consecutive hours she was a prey to violent convulsions. At eleven o'clock, these suddenly ceased, and she became calm. After this she seemed to see what the rest could not see. To lookers-on, it was as if her infernal enemy were near,

though no longer possessing power over her body. After a little while, she fell on her knees before a statue of the Blessed Virgin and, in a voice broken by sobs, said : " O my good Mother, come to my help ; drive away this evil spirit ; I am your child ! You know that I renounce the devil, and that I detest him. O my Mother, do not forsake me ! " With this, she turned in the direction in which her enemy seemed to be, and said in a loud voice : " In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, go ! " During this last scene she seemed to belong to another world. Coming back to herself, she spoke and smiled, and thanked those around.

All was over, the *Salve Regina* was sung in thanksgiving, and Marie Saboureau was once more the good pious girl she had been. She entered the service of Madame Gabaudan, to whom, after Heaven, she owed her deliverance. She remained with this lady twelve years, her mistress looking upon her, in the meantime, more as a daughter than as a servant.

At Pellevoisin, in the autumn of 1902, we were witness of facts and experiences similar to those just described.

A striking case belonging to this class of phenomena came before our notice in 1896. It was supported by the testimony of Canon Ferdinand Brette, of the Paris cathedral of Notre-Dame, who, by the way, is an acknowledged authority on

psychical matters. Canon Brette preached that year at Pellevoisin on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage thither of September 9th. At his instance, a person was earnestly recommended to the prayers of the assembled pilgrims. This person was a certain Madame B——, of Paris, whom he had been exorcising at intervals for four years, and who, in his opinion and that of others, gave unquestionable signs of demoniacal possession. She was completely cured—or delivered, if the reader prefers the term—on the morning of September 9th, the great day of the pilgrimage and the anniversary of the revelation of the scapular. In the meantime, Madame B——, though wearing the scapular, but without knowing its origin, was ignorant of everything concerning Pellevoisin, even to the name of the place. The details of her most curious case were given in full by Canon Brette in a letter to Abbé Salmon, curé of Pellevoisin, which appeared in the *Bulletin de l'Archiconfrérie de Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin* of September 15th, 1896, a review having the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Bourges. In this letter the writer says: “Apart from the question of her visions, Madame B——’s perfect cure during the Pellevoisin pilgrimage is as certain as was her previous state of what the Church regards as demoniacal possession.”

“This fact alone,” he continues, “is a superb jewel to be added to the crown of the Mother-all-

Merciful, who at Pellevoisin in such a marked manner crushes the head of the Infernal Serpent." We have since conferred with Canon Brette on this subject. Madame B——'s cure, effected in such a conclusive manner in 1896, has proved lasting.

A signal case of reputed demoniacal obsession obtained a complete cure at Pellevoisin in the spring of 1900, the person afflicted being a young lady of the diocese of Autun. The affair, coming under the notice of Cardinal Perraud, drew from him the following affirmation, which appeared in the *Voix de Marie*, a weekly organ published with the *imprimatur* of the Bishop of Blois :

“ Autun, November 27, 1901.

“ On the medical testimony of Dr. ——, called upon to examine the extraordinary phenomena presented in the person of Mademoiselle —— in the course of the years 1899 and 1900. I am inclined to sanction the conclusions contained in his report and to consider with him that these phenomena offered the characteristics of a state of diabolical obsession, from which Mademoiselle —— was delivered at the close of a pilgrimage made by her to the sanctuary of Notre-Dame de Pellevoisin.

✠ “ ADOLPHE-LOUIS ALBERT,

“ Card. PERRAUD,

“ Bishop of Autun.”

Facts of Satanic significance in connection with the new shrine in the Berry, which we are considering, were brought into relief by the Rev. P. Schauffer, O.M.I., of the Montmartre basilica of the Sacred Heart, when preaching at Pellevoisin at the annual pilgrimage of 1895. Having shown that the antagonism between the enemy of mankind and the Virgin-Mother of Christ had been at work from the beginning, and even when that Virgin-Mother existed only in the mind of God, and, coming to present times, the preacher asked whether the Prince of darkness had abandoned his struggle with Heaven. For answer, he said ; “ Look around you, my brethren, and listen. Do you not see that Lucifer is multiplying himself a hundred-fold in our time? His tactics have not changed : he has invented nothing new. He contents himself with adapting himself to the temperament of our age. Our opponents treat us as fools, and ask us where Satan is. Alas ! terrible, but at the same time Providential, revelations tell us that at the present day he has his adorers, his ceremonies, and his cultus. For great evils, great remedies.” Coming to the immediate subject of Pellevoisin, the orator exclaimed : “ It is here that Christians should come in order to arm themselves for the battle with Satan. O Virgin of Pellevoisin ! O Mother-all-Merciful ! you are, indeed, the great sign that has appeared in the heaven of the Church of God ! ”

In connection with Pellevoisin, more might be said on this subject of demoniacal possession, on which twentieth-century science can throw but little light, and which has still to look to theology for its most satisfactory explanation.

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE the history of Pellevoisin has been writing itself in facts over the world, Estelle Faguet has been living a quiet, exemplary life, and proving the truth of those words which she gives as having been delivered to her in one of the Apparitions: "I choose the weak and the lowly ones for my glory."

Integrity of life and purpose have characterized her from the beginning. Simplicity—intelligent simplicity—is stamped upon her humble person. While remaining in her sphere and in retirement, she has, during the last twenty-six years, come in contact with the public; she has been questioned and cross-questioned by it; she has been probed by ecclesiastics of note. In her replies, no discordant note has been detected; in her attitude, no weak point.

In the January of 1900, we see Estelle in the eternal city, and at the feet of the Holy Father. She had been led thither by the Duchesse d'Estissac, representing a branch of the de la Rochefou-

cauld family, and by Mgr. Touchet, Bishop of Orleans. His Holiness had said just before : "Let Estelle come in." Estelle had entered, and all other persons had withdrawn. The Father of the Faithful and the *voyante* of Pellevoisin were alone. We have heard from Estelle's own lips the account of what followed. The fact that was to follow concerning the scapular will best tell the result of the interview.

Leo XIII. called the lowly woman at his feet, "Figlia Stella." He bent forward to listen to her communications. His attitude was one of the most paternal benevolence. The conversation turning upon France, he said : "Now, tell me about France."

"Holy Father," replied Estelle, "the Blessed Virgin said that France would have to suffer."

"Yes," echoed the Pontiff, "France will have to suffer."

He then questioned Estelle on the subject of the Apparitions, and accepted a scapular of the Sacred Heart, which, kneeling, she offered him.

"And what, Figlia Stella, do you wish me to do concerning your scapular?" he asked, after a few moments.

"To approve it and give it your blessing, most Holy Father," was the reply. The petitioner then ventured to put forth a request, to the effect that His Holiness would deign to convey in a written form to the Rev. Jean-Baptiste Lémus, O.M.I., then

Superior of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre, certain instructions and encouragement concerning this scapular, in order that the same might spread over the world from the national basilica as from a great radiating centre.

“Does this good religious often come to Rome?” asked His Holiness, in reference to the Rev. J. B. Lémus.

“Yes, most Holy Father,” was Estelle’s reply.

After a few moments, Leo XIII. said : “Let him write, and I will sign.” The Sovereign Pontiff continued : “Figlia Stella, speak to me of the Blessed Virgin.” And afterwards : “You must pray to her for me, Figlia Stella ; you must pray that my life may be spared for the good of the Church.”

The Rev. Joseph Lémus, O.M.I., Procurator General of the Oblate Congregation at Rome, informed of what had taken place between Estelle Faguet and Leo XIII., saw farther into the affair at once. The idea occurred to him of trying to obtain the canonical approbation of the scapular in question, and he lost no time in conferring on the subject with Cardinal Mazzella, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites.

The Cardinal, thus appealed to, at first held out little hope of a request to such an effect being acceded to. He promised, however, to lay the matter before the Pope.

A few days afterwards, Estelle Faguet had

another and farewell audience with the Sovereign Pontiff, at which the Bishop of Orleans and the Duchesse d'Estissac were present. In the course of this interview, the Holy Father, looking at the *voyante* of Pellevoisin and smiling, said: "Figlia Stella, I have not forgotten your scapular. I will speak about it to-morrow."

When, according to Cardinal Mazzella's promise, the question of the canonical approbation of the scapular of the Sacred Heart, as presented to him by Estelle, was submitted to his Holiness, the Pope granted his approval. The Congregation of Rites examined the said scapular, and approved of it in a decree dated April 4th, 1900. Particulars respecting this decree may be best given by citing authorities.

The *Civiltà Catholica*, of January, 1901, in its notice of it, begins by an allusion to the practice introduced by the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque of wearing on one's person an ensign of the Sacred Heart. It then goes on to say: "Although this ensign, painted or worked on stuff, went by the name of a scapular, in reality it was not one, being, as such, wanting as to form and parts. But, in 1876, a scapular, properly so-called, came into existence. It was of white woollen stuff and was composed of two parts, one descending on the breast and displaying the image of the Sacred Heart, and the other descending on the back and displaying an image of the Blessed Virgin." "It

was this scapular," our Roman authority goes on to say, "that was recently presented to our Holy Father, Leo XIII., who approved of it and enriched it with many indulgences by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated April 4th, 1900. This decree also prescribed a special form for blessing and imposing it."

By a decree of the same Congregation, dated May 19th, 1900, the rights concerning the scapular were conferred on the Superior-General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, with the power of delegating these rights, not only to priests of his own Congregation, but to all others who might apply for them.

In this same Roman decree, the Superior of the Chaplains of Paray-le-Monial, the Superior of the basilica of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre, and the Rector of the Church of the *Pace* in Rome are made sharers with the Oblate Congregation in the privileges conferred.

We turn from the *Civiltà Catholica* to an official notice published by the Oblate Congregation, in their *Petites Annales*, in 1900, and translated from their *Libretto*. This notice, after giving the history of the *quasi* scapular of the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, mentions 1876 as the date of the scapular of the Sacred Heart, properly so-called, coming into existence. Then, in a footnote, we read: "Allusion is here made to the scapular of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, approved July 28th, 1877, by Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne,

and at the present day in use among the faithful : it is the scapular which, in the present year (1900), has been presented to the Sovereign Pontiff, and which the Congregation of Rites has examined and approved, having made, however, concerning it, two slight modifications. One of these is that the Liturgical words *Mater Misericordiae* are substituted for *Je suis toute miséricordieuse*, and *J'aime cette dévotion.*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE fact that the scapular has entered into a fresh phase of its history, and that it is now radiating from fresh centres, and notably from the basilica of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre, does not throw Pellevoisin into the shade. On the contrary, the spot that cradled the devotion is growing in importance every day. Thence its Archconfraternity continues to spread over the old and the new world. When we were in the Chapel of the Apparitions in the summer of 1900, we saw two priests enter and take their places at the shrine. We were told that they were from Montreal, and that they brought with them the names of 37,000 fresh associates to be inscribed on the register of the association. Fresh centres of devotion in connection with Pellevoisin are multiplying throughout France. The most important of these is that which has its seat at the church of St. Eucher at Lyons, where there is a chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de Pellevoisin and where a branch confraternity in honour

of the Mother-all-Merciful is canonically established. The curé of the church, Abbé Paul Bauron, to whom we have had occasion to allude in these pages, has just been raised to the dignity of a Protonotary Apostolic in acknowledgment of his services as Secretary General of the Marian Congress at Freiburg.

Although in all this there is progress and the further spreading of a sublime message, it does not mean that, since what may be considered a crowning triumph for Pellevoisin in Rome's canonical approbation of its scapular, the bark of the new devotion has been sailing altogether in smooth waters. On the contrary, a strong blast of opposition has been brought to bear upon it, marking it with a sign which works of a Divine origin are seldom without.

Something of the war upon religion, which the first two years of the present century have seen in France, has breathed upon it, and a local organ of the Berry has attributed to one high in office at the Palais-Bourbon words to the effect that Pellevoisin was to be suppressed, if possible, as a second Lourdes was not needed in France.

Its curé, Abbé Salmon, who saw its Archconfraternity come into existence, and who, in the most capable manner possible, for twenty-six years performed the office of Director of that Archconfraternity, has lately been removed to another scene of activity, namely, the cure of Massay, in the

department of the Indre. But in the things of God, props in the shape of human instruments are quickly replaced by others. Several French bishops are warm supporters of the cause of Pellevoisin.

The Pellevoisin pilgrimage has features of its own. In the afternoon a long procession, on which the sun generally shines, making of it a brilliant line of colour, starts from the parish church and winds along a certain tract of country. From distance to distance banner answers banner, and refrain, refrain. Various melodies melt into one, making a full-voiced anthem. From the volume of sound the words, "*Laudate Mariam*" and "*Terre bénie de Pellevoisin*" linger on the ear.

After the line of colour come the pilgrims, assembled by thousands. The *cortège* moves on until it reaches the crest of the hill dividing the valley of the Indre from that of the Nohant. A scene of dazzling beauty lies around—one of the fairest sites in the French midlands. Coming back through the burnished greens and golds of meadowland and cornfield, and then through the burgh of Pellevoisin, the procession draws up in front of the Chapel of the Apparitions. Every available inch of ground is covered by the mass of human life. A few heart-stirring words are then addressed to the throng by a preacher for the occasion.

On this favoured spot of earth, and on a commanding eminence, there is a colossal crucifixion scene in course of construction. It is the work of

the Rev. O. Leborgne, S.M., of Senlis, one of the great promoters of the devotion radiating from Pellevoisin. From this Calvary, as also from a tumulus near, composed of the bones of dead Gauls and Romans, and said to be one of the most remarkable in France, a magnificent sweep of country is to be seen. The expanse of landscape stretches for miles in every direction. The spectator gazing at it from either of the above-mentioned points, sees a splendid panorama, made up of gentle hill and dale, and of meadow land and cornfield, and dotted here and there with richly wooded patches, remnants of one or more of the ancient forests that once covered old Gaul. When the rays of the setting sun are upon this panorama, suffusing it with mellow tints and changing into roseate hues its distant browns and golds, the beauty of the scene defies description.

History, as well as natural beauties, appeals to us on this spot. The British visitor to Pellevoisin sees in the green and smiling stretch of country before him, an historic battle ground where Philip-Augustus wrested from Henry II. of England a portion of the rich dower which Eleanor of Aquitaine had taken to the English crown. He sees points in the landscape which, in the still unchanged French of seven centuries ago, tell where Frenchmen and Englishmen fell in deadly strife. In the wood immediately in front of him, there are no less than four spots telling by their names, to this day, that the blood of thousands of French and

English once soaked their soil. There is the *Petite Tuée* (little slaughter) and the *Grande Tuée* (big slaughter); and the *Francosius*, which, in mediæval French, meant defeat of the French. The *Fosse aux Anglais*, close by, marks the spot where the English, just afterwards, were defeated in numbers. Philip-Augustus brought the campaign to a close by a brilliant victory at Palhuau, and Henry II. of England died of a broken heart at Chinon two years afterwards.

But the picturesque and the historic form only as a background against which the religious interest of Pellevoisin shows in relief. The miniature chapel appeals to numbers, as no other shrine does. The Rev. Father Marie-Antoine, a Capuchin of Toulouse, reputed for his holiness throughout the south of France, when preaching at Pellevoisin in 1894, at the time of the annual pilgrimage, expressed himself as follows: "I am acquainted with the most famous sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin in the world, and I have obtained signal graces at each; I have been the leader of thousands of persons to Lourdes; yet, if I except my impressions at St. John in Montana in Palestine, I may say that nowhere have I been so impressed by a sense of Our Lady's maternal attributes as here at Pellevoisin; nowhere as here have I so understood the meaning of the words of the Magnificat: 'He that is mighty hath done great things in me.'"

In presence of pilgrims going in increasing

numbers to Pellevoisin, and of buildings rising on the spot to meet the wants of these pilgrims, the idea may present itself as to what is likely to be the future of this, the most recent in date of the great shrines of France. An answer to such a question is given beforehand in the following words spoken by Abbé Paul Bauron, at the Marian Congress of Lyons of 1900: "People will go to Pellevoisin from all parts and in greater numbers than to Lourdes and to La Sallette. There, the promises made at Paray-le-Monial will become a tangible reality."

Epilogue.

IN viewing as a whole the phenomena, of which under the head of Apparitions and Revelations we have treated in the foregoing pages, we see them bound together as by immaterial links in the shape of certain leading ideas. In each Apparition, or group of Apparitions, the necessity of prayer is insisted on.

At Pellevoisin, the command to pray is reiterated with two-fold force, the burden each time being : "Let them pray." At La Salette, after enumerating the enormities of a guilty people, the celestial figure says : "It is that which makes my Son's arm grow heavy ; I can no longer hold it up." At Pellevoisin, she says : "I can no longer restrain my Son." The words at Pontmain, on the scroll in the night sky : "My Son allows Himself to be moved" (*Mon Fils se laisse toucher*), find their echo at Pellevoisin in the words to Estelle : "If my Son allows Him-

self to be moved, it is because of your great patience and resignation."

Between Pellevoisin and Lourdes the connecting link is strong. Bernadette Souberous is told to pray for the conversion of sinners. At Pellevoisin the words are : " I am come especially for the conversion of sinners."

As in the case of Mélanie and Maximin before them, the woman, Estelle, and the child, Bernadette, are made the recipients of secrets which they are not to reveal. Each is given to understand that the extraordinary favours of which she is the object are not to exempt her from the sorrow which is the ordinary lot of mortals. To Bernadette the Blessed Virgin says : " I promise to make you happy ; not in this world, but in the next."

To Estelle the words are : " Do not think you will be exempt from suffering ; no, you will have to suffer. It is in that that the merit of life consists."

Each is employed as a messenger. Bernadette is told to go and see the parish priest on the subject of the erection of a chapel at Lourdes in honour of the Immaculate. Estelle is told to go and see the prelate on the subject of the propagation of the scapular that had just been revealed.

Between the first group and the last group of the series of Apparitions which we are considering, and which extend over a period of forty-six years, there is a most subtle thread of similarity.

In the novice, Catherine Labouré, the servant,

Estelle Faguet, seems to live again. The former sees rays of light emitted from the hands of the radiant figure, representing to her the Immaculate Conception, and is given to understand that these rays are symbolic of the graces which the Blessed Virgin obtains for those who ask them of her. Estelle sees, as it were, abundant raindrops falling from the hands of her heavenly visitant, and is told that these signify the graces showered on those who wear the scapular revealed at Pellevoisin.

Sister Catherine is told to give him who has charge of her soul an account of the mysterious things she sees and hears. Estelle, respecting the sublime secrets of which she is the recipient, is told to take the advice of her "confessor and director." Sister Catherine's mission is to be an unseen instrument in the striking and diffusion of the medal of the Immaculate Conception ; Estelle's is to further the propagation of the scapular of the Sacred Heart, and to be a living witness of its revelation. Both are told that they will have trials and contradictions, that they will be treated as impostors and visionaries, but that, on the other hand, they will be interiorly sustained and strengthened.

At the close of the Apparitions in the Rue du Bac, when the novice Catherine is about to become a professed Sister of Charity, the last words of the celestial communications with which she has been favoured are : " I shall watch over you " (*J'aurai mon œil sur toi*). At Pellevoisin, when Estelle is

given to understand that she will see the Blessed Virgin no more on earth, the last words are : " I shall be invisibly near you " (*Je serai invisiblement près de toi*).

When we consider the great Apparitions of the nineteenth century, we see that each of these manifestations, either in the shape of a single Apparition or of a series, conveys a distinct message : we see, too, that these different messages form one, concordant in meaning, scriptural in sense, and full of sublime harmony. This collective message is suffused with Gospel light ; it is theological ; it is dogmatic. Does it not proclaim, twice in an interval of twenty-eight years, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception ? Does it not, by the ensanguined cross of Pontmain, and by the name above that cross, proclaim the mystery of our Redemption ?

In presence of such symmetry of plan and unity of meaning, we are of opinion that the very substance of this transcendent message, pieced together as it is by words coming to us from the mouths of lowly unlettered beings, mostly children, and separated from each other by time and space, is, in itself, a more convincing proof of the reality of the Divine communications with which these lowly and unlettered ones proclaim themselves to have been favoured, than are the most startling miracles associated with the names of La Salette, Lourdes, and other sanctuaries connected with the great chain of Apparitions we are considering.

In presence of the Gospel meaning of this collective message, one cannot but be struck by the reiterated force with which the necessity of prayer is insisted on. And, as if to add the value of material proof to the reality of the fulfilment of Gospel promises in this respect, we see thousands and thousands of ex-voto offerings covering the walls of the temples and sanctuaries that have arisen in France commemorative of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in France in the nineteenth century.

THE END

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